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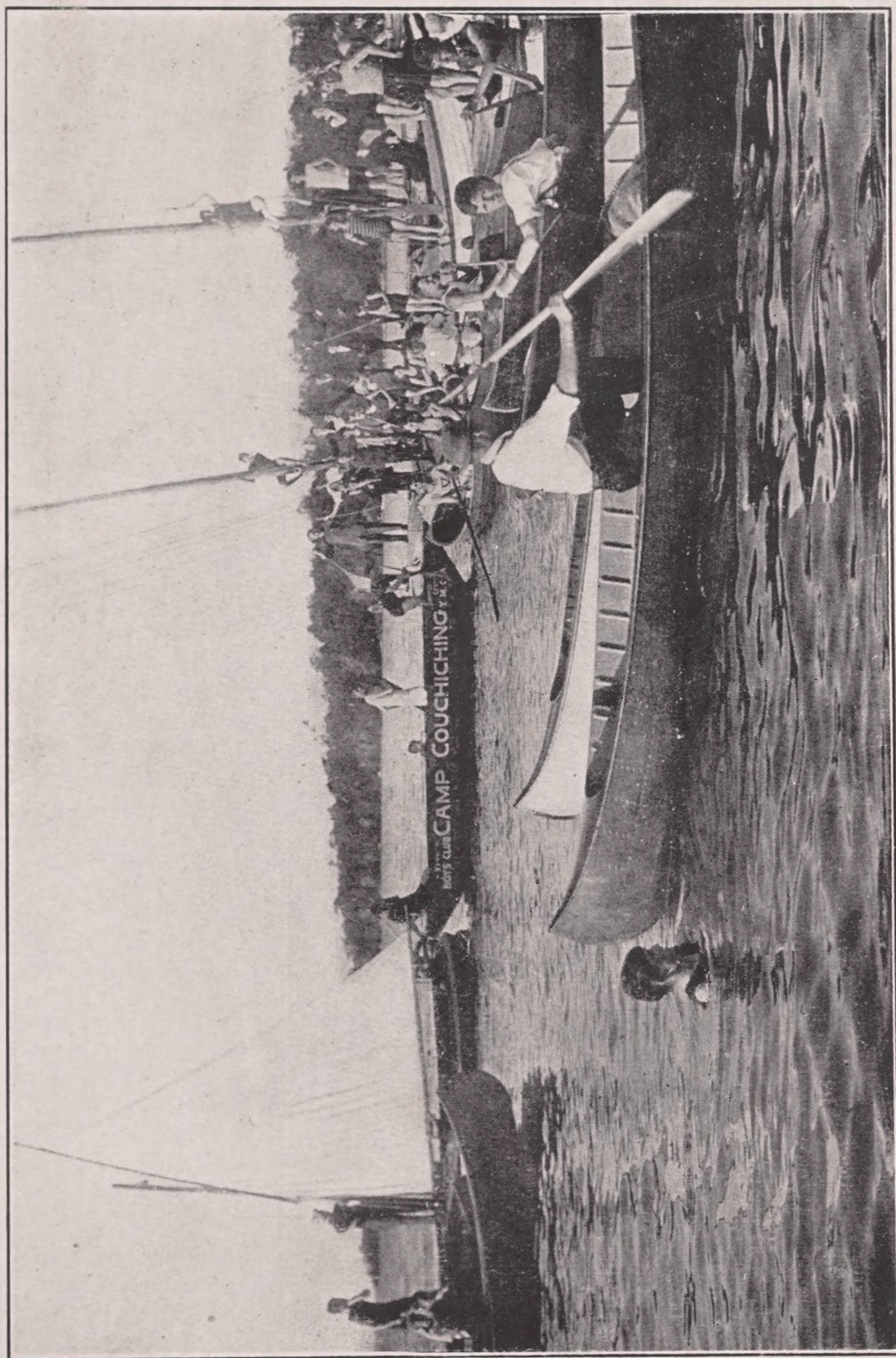
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FROM TENDERFOOT TO SCOUT



THE FLEET AT CAMP COUCHICHING

FROM TENDERFOOT TO SCOUT

BY
ANNA C. RUDDY



HODDER & STOUGHTON

NEW YORK

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TO
THE BIG CHIEF
AND
THE LEADERS OF 1910

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*"Let us probe the silent places, let us seek what luck
betide us.*

Let us journey to a land I know.

*There's a whisper in the night wind: There's a star
agleam to guide us,*

And the Wild is calling, calling . . . let us go."

SERVICE.

CHAPTER I

A MATTER OF DISCIPLINE

JUST a moment, Norah. There is another matter
I wish to speak about."

Norah paused respectfully at the door of the morning room, where she had been receiving orders for the day, a little sparkle of antagonism in her Irish blue eyes. When her mistress spoke in that tone it was usually well to be on the defensive.

Mrs. Merrill carefully adjusted her gold pencil, and sitting back regarded her cook disapprovingly.

"It seems to me that you have been with me long enough to know my wishes regarding Sandy's companionships," she said severely.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And now I find that he has been entertaining all sorts of objectionable boys in the barn. You must have known it."

"Oh thim, sure they wasn't doin' no harm. I kep' me eye on thim ivery minute, ma'am," replied Norah in a relieved tone.

"Very good of you, I am sure," said Mrs. Merrill, dryly. "Nevertheless I want to make it clearly understood that I have positively forbidden Sanford to have these boys on the premises at all. A while ago he took to inviting them to his room, and they actually began having wrestling bouts there. It is all very trying, and I thought I had settled the matter when I forbade that."

"But they wasn't doin' no harm," repeated Norah.

"That is not the question," said Mrs. Merrill, patiently. Norah had been in her employ since before Sandy was born, and was his self-constituted champion whether he was right or wrong.

"It is the matter of companionship that I am most interested in. If they were quiet, gentlemanly boys I should not object, but I will not have these boisterous, noisy creatures about the place."

"B'ys is all divils," said Norah cheerfully. "Divils they're born, and divils they'll be as long as they're b'ys, and it's me own opinion that the quiet ones is the biggest divils of all."

Mrs. Merrill looked duly shocked.

"Well, any way, I shall not permit it," she said with decision, "and I shall expect you to see that my wishes are carried out, so far as the barn is concerned."

Norah returned to the kitchen, to express her

opinion to the cat who was sunning himself on the window sill.

"Indade and it's a misfortune to be born widout a home," she soliloquized. "In Ireland me poor mother had nothin' but a mud cabin and a turf fire, but the b'ys brought in who they liked, and if there was anything to laugh at we all laughed together, but as for this poor craythur, he hasn't got a place for the sole of his fut at all, at all. It's 'Sandy, yuh talk too loud,' and 'Sandy, yer boots are muddy,' or 'Sandford, yuh'll break this or that,' from mornin' till night, bad luck to thim." Whereupon she relieved her overwrought feelings by baking a batch of cookies entirely for Sandy's benefit.

That evening a disorganized Wild West Show gathered in the lane back of the Merrill premises, to listen with exclamations of disappointment and mutterings of discontent, to the explanation given by Buffalo Bill alias Sandy Merrill as to the reason why they could not rehearse in the barn any more.

"Did we break anything or do any damage?" demanded the Indian who was leader in the raid on the Deadwood stage.

"No, you didn't do a thing."

"Well, why can't we stay then?" persisted the intrepid driver of the stage coach.

"Oh, hang it all, fellows, you can't, that's all; the bunch is too noisy and I can't help it. You've just got to stay out," cried Sandy, his round, freckled face hot with embarrassment.

"All right, come on fellows. Who wants their

old stable? It's a rotten old place, any way," exploded Indian number two ungratefully.

The boys started off, and Sandy stood looking after them with clenched fists and a dark frown on his face. Suddenly two or three of them paused and looked back.

"Come on, Sandy," called Barney Allen, his particular chum. "Don't you go gettin' sore now; you can't help it if the folks turned us down."

The others joined in the invitation, and Sandy's face cleared.

"Where'll we go now?" he asked in a mollified tone as they moved off together.

"I know a dandy hang-out," said one. "It's back of Ted Spier's tobacco store. You can get all the stuff for cigarettes you want for almost nothing, and you can play some dandy games too, you bet. I made a dollar there the other night in no time."

"What about the show?" asked Barney.

"We'll have to chuck that," was the gloomy response.

The matter of Sandy's companionships was settled to Mrs. Merrill's complete satisfaction. The spring evenings were no more made hideous with the howling dervishes in the barn, and she thanked Heaven that she was not as other mothers, who knew not how to rule their households with firmness and discretion. Sandy became quieter than usual and the boys were not hanging about waiting for him. He spent an hour or two in his room after school and then as soon as supper was finished, usually slipped

out the back way and did not return until bed time, or near it.

Mr. Merrill was away from home a great deal, owing to the absorbing nature of his business, and when at home was much preoccupied. He had not begun to take his fourteen year old son seriously. He was such a noisy, blundering youngster, always getting into mischief without meaning it. The one other member of the family was Alice, sixteen, pretty, daintily dressed and absolutely sure of herself.

Four peaceful weeks had passed since the incident of the Wild West Show, when a thunderbolt burst over Mrs. Merrill's head in the shape of a note from Sandy's teacher.

"Sandford has been a ringleader in stirring up trouble for some time," it informed her, and "he would have to apologize and amend his ways, or be suspended."

"I cannot understand this," she exclaimed to Alice, who was filling several bowls with early June roses.

"Well, I can," responded Alice promptly. "Why, mother, that boy is just awful, if you want to know."

Mrs. Merrill carefully folded the note.

"I don't know what you mean, Alice," she said coldly. "I am sure he has been very quiet and studious since I have not permitted him to have the boys here any more."

"Quiet and studious!" repeated Alice derisively.

"Where is he when he goes out nights, I'd like to know?"

"He only goes down to the corner, he tells me. I am sure, Alice, there is no need to talk as though Sandy was a bad boy."

"Well, any way, he carries on like everything at school, and I'm glad he's in trouble for once," said Alice, her head on one side as she surveyed a bowl of yellow roses from the angle of the doorway.

"I shall talk to him when he comes in," remarked her mother quietly.

Sandy was sullen and unresponsive for the first time in his life when his mother broached the subject, and his eye flashed back at her for an instant, with a glint of hardness altogether new.

"I'd like to know what she wrote to you for," he blurted out when he found his voice.

"She wrote to me because you must either apologize or be put out of school, and I shall see that you apologize, and are a better boy in future."

"I won't apologize to her, and if she was a fellow I'd punch her head."

"Sandford!" ejaculated Mrs. Merrill, aghast at this declaration of independence in her usually merry-faced boy.

"Well, if you're not the limit! I should think you'd be afraid to talk to mother like that," exclaimed Alice, who had just entered the room.

"We will not discuss the matter any further at present, Sandford. You will kindly stay in the house until I give you permission to leave it," said

Mrs. Merrill in the tone which both her son and daughter knew well from intimate and varied experience.

"My, but you've got a sweet temper," remarked Alice as he scowled blackly and strode out of the room.

Sandy tore up to his room three steps at a time, with clenched fists and lowering brow. He had been learning fast during these weeks since he had joined the company in Spier's back yard. Not that he cared for them or the things they did so much as for the sense of freedom from restraint. Here he was among men and those who thought themselves men. He was one of them, and he did feel deliciously big to smoke a cigarette and play a game of craps, or even swear once in a while with the best of them.

Yes, he had learned a few things. One of them was that the fellows who drank and smoked and swore were the true sports. The goody-goody kind, who went to Sunday School and obeyed girl teachers at school, were a poor weak lot.

"I am at a loss to know what has come over the boy. He actually told me that he would *not* apologize to Miss Marvin," confided Mrs. Merrill to her husband that evening in the cool green and white living room, after she had told him the story of the note and the trouble at school.

Mr. Merrill sat back in a Morris chair enjoying a cigar, and absent-mindedly turning the leaves of the latest Scribner's while he listened to his wife's story. He was wont on such occasions to laugh at

her complaints and tell her to let the boy break the furniture if he wanted to, but this was a little more serious. He was a clean-shaven, young-looking man, and the resemblance between him and Sandy was striking.

"What do you propose to do about it?" he asked, laying down the magazine resignedly.

"I don't know: of course he must apologize, though I doubt if he is so very much in the wrong after all. I am going to talk to Mrs. Jones, his Sunday school teacher, to-morrow. She is such a sweet, motherly woman, and I am sure she will have some influence over him. Perhaps she can say something to him on Sunday."

Mr. Merrill examined the end of his cigar thoughtfully.

"I think that since Nature has conferred one mother on him, that is all he needs for the present," he said finally.

"Well, if you will tell me what he *does* need I shall be thankful."

"The young cub probably needs a sound thrashing, first of all."

"Edward, you are positively brutal! If that isn't just like a man, resorting to brute force first thing, without looking into the right or wrong of the case."

"What do you propose to do, then?" repeated Mr. Merrill, undisturbed by this arraignment.

"I have done everything that a mother can do to bring that child up into respectability—and the dear knows I have had my hands full. Why, I have

emptied tons of stuff out of his room—the queerest collection of rubbish he is always bringing home. Then he would have this house fairly running over with the noisiest hoodlums in the neighborhood—but I have stopped all that; not one of them comes near the place any more. I have accomplished that much, at least.”

Mrs. Merrill picked up her embroidery frame with an air of finality, and proceeded to work under the light of the green-shaded electric lamp, while her husband watched her with troubled, thoughtful face, his mind wrestling with the problem of his son's bringing up, which had presented itself to him in a new aspect, and one which he could not get away from.

The next afternoon being Saturday, Sandy was in his room deep in the delights of the latest five cent thriller, a supply of which was always to be found hidden under the heavy wardrobe in the corner. His mother was entertaining a caller on the piazza, and their voices floated up through the open window, but he was dead to everything save the entrancing story. It portrayed the adventures of a youth of fourteen who fled from home to escape the cruelties of a wicked step-mother, and went to New York, where almost immediately he attracted the notice of the detective bureau by his sagacity in foiling the plans of a desperate criminal. At sixteen he was the trusted advisor to the Chief of Police, and at eighteen was engaged to be married to the daughter of a Wall Street millionaire. It was full of thrilling adventures and hair-breadth escapes, and when he finished

it he drew a long, envious breath, a dozen wild schemes floating through his active brain.

Sandy's imagination was his strong point, though no one knew anything about it but himself. He usually lived in a world all his own—a world peopled with pirates, Indians, cowboys, scouts and outlaws of all descriptions. When he rushed down stairs and through the house to the detriment of carpets and furniture, his mother could not know, of course, that he was an Algonquin Chief at the head of his tribe, making a death-dealing assault on the savage Iroquois. What to his world at large was an ordinary Toronto street, was to him a plain over which the great buffalo herd might sweep at any moment. The trees which lined the wide street on which their home stood were so many ambuscades, from behind which many imaginary skirmishes had taken place.

There was no stirring adventure in which Sandy had not taken part. On the high seas he had captured the intrepid buccaneer and had swept into port with a band of discomfited rascals down the hold, and the British colors flying where he had found the black flag of the pirate. He had stolen through the trackless forest on moccasined feet, carefully obliterating every trace of his presence, and, crouched near the enemy's camp-fire, had heard their secret plans discussed. He had waded for miles through streams to throw the bloodhounds off his track, and by his own right hand had slain whole packs of wolves and other wild things of the forest.

It was an enchanted land, this world of imagina-

tion, compared with which the workaday world of every day was a dreary waste of restrictions and don'ts.

He now became conscious of the voices on the piazza below.

"I knew you would understand me, Mrs. Jones," his mother was saying, in smooth, even tones. "You see I have made it a point always to regulate every detail of my son's life. I have a horror of everything that savors of roughness, and for this reason I have positively forbidden him to take part in any of these half savage sports which boys and young men think so necessary nowadays. When he gets a little older he may play tennis in summer, and perhaps I may permit curling as a winter sport; I am not sure yet."

The visitor murmured a polite reply, but Sandy did not wait to hear any more. With a vicious shove he pushed the magenta-covered novel back to its hiding place and flung himself out of the room. Tennis, forsooth! That was for girls and white-faced bank clerks. As for curling—bah! Hadn't he heard his mother remark that the minister shortened the prayer meeting on winter evenings that he might go to curl? Well, all he had to say was that if Dr. Thompson was dead stuck on a thing, there was nothing doing in it for him.

He rushed down stairs and through the kitchen, banging every door as he went, causing Norah to hurl an expletive after him, then sat down on the back fence to think matters over. He had not been there

long when Barney Allen sauntered along with a basket of potatoes from his mother's grocery, followed by Ginger, his dog, the other member of this three-cornered friendship. It was their favorite spot for the exchange of confidences and yellow-backed novels, and Barney set his basket down, ready for a chat.

Sandy's eyes were sparkling with excitement, and he glanced over his shoulder to see that Norah was nowhere within ear-shot.

"Say," he exclaimed in an impressive whisper. "How'd you like to go to New York and be a detective?"

That was the dream of Barney's life, but he merely ran his fingers through his red hair and stared at Sandy for a moment.

"Aw, come off your perch. Are you goin' nutty?" he demanded, finally.

"I'm giving it to you straight, and you can come or not as you like, but I'm going to New York, and I'm going to do a few things that'll make folks sit up, I am."

"Do you want me?"

"Sure I do. Look here: I've got some money in my bank upstairs; I guess there's enough for us both, if you're game."

"I'm game all right, but——"

"But what?" inquired Sandy, impatiently.

"Nothing—only there isn't anybody to carry these things around for my mother," Barney faltered slowly.

Sandy's countenance fell for an instant, for even he knew what a brave fight the little widow was making to support her six children, of whom Barney was the eldest. Then a bright idea struck him, and he exclaimed:

"See here, that's all right. Don't you see you'll be able to send her lots of money soon, and that will be ever so much better than staying home to do poky things like that."

At this moment Ginger created a diversion by chasing a cat up the post beside Sandy. The cat spat and hissed, and Ginger barked furiously, and in the midst of the confusion Barney made up his mind.

"I'll call your bluff on that," he said, when peace was restored.

"Shake on it. You're a sport, old fellow," cried Sandy delightedly, and they proceeded to map out their plans.

Thus it happened that on Monday morning when the last stray scholar had been gathered into school, and the familiar hum of voices arose from every classroom, Sandy and Barney were missing. At that moment they were on a Grand Trunk train speeding on its way to Niagara Falls and New York. Barney was on the top wave of excitement, chatting constantly to Sandy, who sat next the window, dressed in his best clothes, a purse containing eleven dollars and sixty-two cents in his inside pocket, and a look which defied fate on his freckled face.

Neither of them had brought any baggage, and neither of them had thought of eating breakfast.

When the first call to dinner came, Sandy led the way into the dining car. He knew all about it, for he had been in one with his father and mother once last summer. They ate their way straight through the bill of fare, and Sandy generously tipped the waiter before leaving.

"Now for Niagara Falls," he said, as they settled down in their seats once more and he consulted his gold watch for the twentieth time. It was an expensive watch for a boy of fourteen to carry, and had his full name, John Sandford Merrill, engraved on the inside case. It was the gift of his grandfather, whose namesake he was, and he was very proud of it.

"Yes, now for the Falls," repeated Barney. "We'll see everything there, then we can go to New York to-morrow. Have you got the tickets?"

"I only bought tickets to the Falls. I'll buy them for New York to-morrow," replied Sandy easily, as the train drew up at Suspension Bridge.

CHAPTER II

A FAR COUNTRY

TWO or three days later the runaways were coming back home, not in luxurious ease, ordering their meals in a dining car, but afoot, penniless and hungry. It had all been so different from what they had expected, and they were thoroughly disillusioned. Their clothes were dusty, their stockings torn and Barney's boots were already in holes.

All day long they had trudged wearily along a dusty road which had spun out endlessly before them like a gray ribbon, dipping into deep gullies here, ascending long hills there, or turning unexpected corners to reveal long flat stretches in the midst of green fields. Just now they were descending a low hill, at the foot of which a stone bridge crossed a stream, rippling musically over pebbles, shining white in the sunlight. Great elms spread their leafy arms over the creek, and a hundred yards to the left a cool wood echoed with the twittering of nesting birds. Everything breathed the joy of a day in early June.

A red squirrel chattered a challenge to the boys from an overhanging limb, but they were too absorbed in their own affairs to even shy a stone at him.

It was an inglorious retreat, and they were not

taking defeat easily. Barney had nagged and complained all day, and Sandy had exercised more self-restraint than he had ever used in his life before, but there was fire in his eye if Barney had but seen it.

"Say, this sort of thing makes me sick," he grumbled, in continuation of a long line of similar remarks. "How do you think a fellow's goin' to get along without a bite to eat all day?"

Sandy had sprained his ankle earlier in the day, and limped painfully. He made no audible reply to Barney's remarks, but his hands in his pockets were clinched, and something inside of him was repeating over and over again, like the haunting strains of a chorus: "I've got to lick him. I've got to lick him."

"Gee, but I'm sorry I come. I'll never believe a word you tell me again, Sandy Merrill, and you bet you'll never catch me running away with *you* again."

"Wait till you're asked, you bum, and shut up, will you?" exploded Sandy angrily.

"No, I won't. You coaxed me to come and you lied to me, so there."

Sandy was furious with anger.

"You quitter, you've got to take that back," he shouted, stepping nearer to Barney and waving his fists threateningly.

"I won't take it back, and I'm not a quitter, either."

"All right, if you won't, you can take that, and that," Sandy roared, giving him two stinging blows across the cheek with his open palm.

The red squirrel ran screaming with excitement to

the topmost limb, to view from a respectful distance the scene which followed. All the pent-up disappointment and ill humor of days lent force to the battle.

Barney was staggered for an instant, and then with a roar like a young bull he sprang at his assailant, his head down and his arms swinging wildly. Sandy was the smaller of the two and was hampered by his lame ankle, but these deficiencies were more than offset by quickness and accuracy of aim. Neither one gave any thought to self-defense, but in blind rage each was intent on landing as many blows as possible.

In less time than it takes to tell it, blood was spurting from Sandy's nose, and he had landed a straight left on Barney's right eye. Then they clinched and were soon rolling over and over in the dusty road, grunting and sputtering, sometimes one uppermost and sometimes the other.

So absorbed were they that they failed to hear the exclamations and expletives of a man hurrying along the bank of the creek, as rapidly as his weight of years and of flesh would permit, his bleared eyes full of delight at sight of the battle. It was old Bill Green, the tramp tailor, noted in three counties for his love of strong drink, his inability to stick to a job after the first pay-day, and for his unfailing good nature.

"Hey there, youngsters," he panted when he reached the bridge. "Time's up. Time's up, I say!"

Startled and ashamed, Sandy released his hold, but Barney held on like grim death. He neither heard nor saw the intruder.

"Oh, look here now, Red-head, you lose on this round. Y'ought to listen to the referee. Git up there or I'll lambaste you myself, so I will."

Barney heard and scrambled to his feet with a forbidding scowl in the direction of the newcomer, who was in high good humor.

"Gee whiz! If you're not the blamedest brace of young gamecocks I've seen in a month of Sundays," he chuckled admiringly. "Drawed blood, too, as I'm a sinner! Say, I'll give you one minute before you begin the second round. That's square, ain't it?"

Sandy stopped mopping the blood from his face long enough to turn and look at the speaker.

"Who are you, anyway?" he asked disdainfully.

"Who? Me? Why I'm the referee, Sonny. I'm goin' to see that you play the game fair this time, see?"

"Well we don't want any referee and you needn't bother about us," was the haughty reply.

"No bother at all," said Bill reassuringly, taking a clay pipe out of his pocket. "Now you just hold your horses a minute while I light my pipe; then I'll start you." He was a short, pudgy man, with a red, unshaven face and shabby clothes, but he fairly radiated good fellowship.

He leaned against the bridge while he cut his tobacco and filled his pipe in a leisurely manner.

"Yes, sir, I'm goin' to see fair play. None of

your wrastlin' or hittin' in the clinches when your uncle's on board, me hearties. I know the rules of the game, I do."

Barney had gone to pick his cap out of the dust fifty feet back, and Sandy was still busy with his nose.

"You're not going to referee any game for us, I tell you," he repeated crossly. Neither he nor Barney were anxious to renew hostilities at this stranger's bidding, but were too tired to start on their journey again.

Bill struck a match, and, shading it from the light breeze, applied it to his pipe and puffed vigorously for a moment or two.

"Now, then, get ready," he cried, "and when I holler 'time' you just lay into it for all you're worth."

Sandy's eyes turned to a little path which led to the bank of the creek nearest the woods.

"Come on, let's shake this old Buttinsky," he urged, without looking at Barney, and led the way as fast as the pain in his ankle would let him. Barney followed, much to Bill's disgust. He had been hoping for some rare sport, and he halted after them, his face eloquent of disappointment.

"Say, I thought you was real sports, but you ain't," he complained as he caught up to them. "Why you ought to ha' kep' it up till one or the other of you got knocked out: that's accordin' to rules."

No one answered, and he continued hopefully:

"Yez could do it right here better than in the road. I'll let you have a rest, then you can start."

The boys bathed their faces in the stream and then threw themselves down on a mossy bank. All the anger and resentment had died out of their hearts, and left them too miserable and hungry and homesick even to answer Bill's latest proposal.

That individual sat down heavily, with a sigh. "No, you ain't no sports at all," he grumbled. "Why, you didn't even shake hands. Jiminy, that's so! If yez won't fight, yez have just got to shake hands, that's all."

There was a sullen silence for a moment or two; then Sandy, glancing towards Barney, caught an appeal in his eye. In a moment they were on their feet, their hands had met, and they both turned away looking very subdued and very foolish.

Their self-appointed good angel gave an approving nod, and spat cheerfully into the creek, then lay back on the mossy bank and gave himself up to the full enjoyment of his pipe.

The late afternoon sunshine lay in a golden sheen over the woods and fields, and the creek babbled and sang over the stones on its way to Lake Ontario, not far distant. A song sparrow poured forth its joyous notes from the trees just above them, and it seemed as though the whole earth throbbed and pulsated with the life and joy of early June. Only the two boys were out of tune with it all. There was no beauty in anything they saw or heard; they only wanted to get something to eat and to get home.

Bill lay flat on his back, gazing silently up into the cloud-flecked blue of the sky and blowing curling rings of smoke above his head, but his mind was still dwelling regretfully on the unfinished fight.

"That weren't no fair fight," he broke forth at last, removing his short pipe and waving it argumentatively. "You got to learn to do it scientific. You played foul right along; you hit below the belt; you wrestled; you did everything you hadn't ought to ha' done. Why, look here, if a guy that knowed how 'd come along he'd wallop the life out of a dozen fellows like you with one hand. Gee whiz! You just ought to see a real fight once; then you'd learn a thing or two."

Sandy was rubbing his lame ankle and Barney lay face downward on the bank. He looked up with a glimmer of interest.

"Did you ever see a prize fight?" he asked.

"Sure I did," lied Bill promptly. "Why, Sonny, if I had a dollar for every big mix-up I've seen I'd be rich, you bet. There ain't a man in this country as knows the game better'n I do, if I do say it myself."

He closed his eyes and puffed away for a moment, to let the boys take in the magnitude of this statement.

Barney drew a deep breath, and stretched his tired limbs on the soft moss.

"What one did you see last?" he ventured.

Bill rubbed his stubbly chin, and gazed abstractedly into space for a moment before replying.

"I was just tryin' to think," he said finally. "Seems to me 'twas down in 'Frisco the time Jeffries and Fitzsimmons had their big mix-up. Yes, sure, that was it. I 'member now. Gee! that was the funniest thing I ever seen, the way Jeff licked Fitz all round the ring; 'twas enough to make a pig laugh."

Urged for particulars, Bill launched forth into an inconsequent story of the fight, ending up in what was supposed to be an explanation of the relative merits of the straight left and the right swing, and describing just how a right-hand cross-counter might be successfully met with an inside left-hook. By this time the boys were alive with interest, their woes forgotten for the time, and Bill was accepted as a member of that inner circle where boys are wont to place, regardless of age or condition, all those who are true sports and who play the game. They were now on an established footing.

"Where you fellows goin'?" he asked, after he had exhausted the story of the fight.

"To Toronto," they answered in a breath.

"Live there?"

"Ye-es." The reply was reluctant.

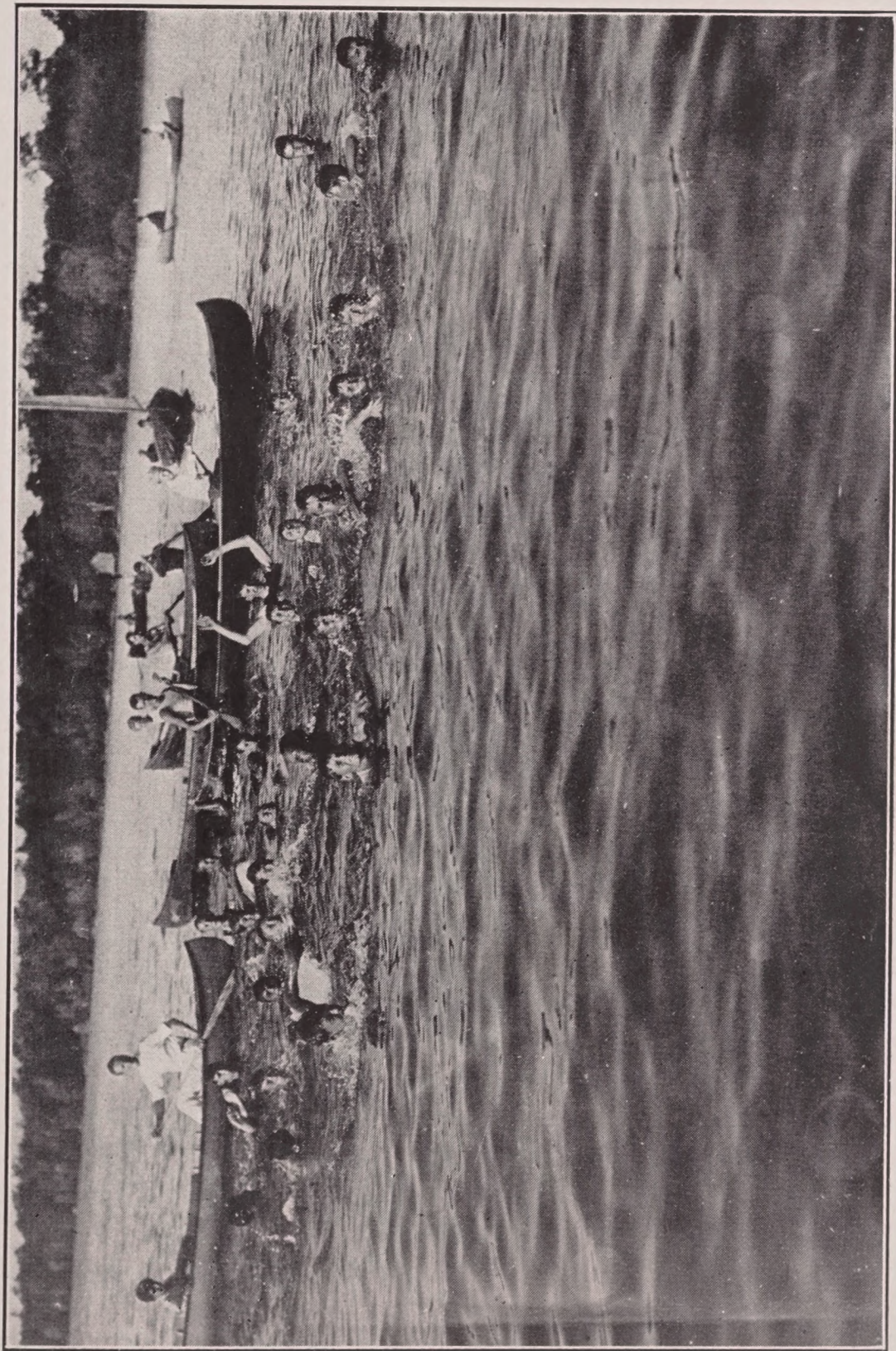
Bill relit his pipe and looked thoughtful.

"How long can a fellow live without eating anything?" demanded Barney suddenly.

"Oh, I don't know. Pretty near a week I guess. How long since you had anything to eat?"

"This morning."

"Huh, you ain't got no kick comin'. Wait till



A SWIMMING RACE

you're so thin your bones begin to rattle; then you may talk."

"Gee, I feel as though I was goin' to die. My bones are rattling now," exclaimed Barney gloomily.

Bill's evident interest in them, and the feeling of relief at being able to talk, drew forth their story, and they told it without reservation, Bill evincing his interest by sitting up to listen and uttering sympathetic ejaculations at intervals.

They told how at Niagara Falls they had seen everything and enjoyed everything, and stayed at the best hotel, as it was the only one Sandy knew—he had been there once with his mother—then how, when the bill was settled next morning, they were dismayed to find they had only seventy-two cents left. They tried to cross the river, but were stopped at the bridge by a stern-looking official. Then they had started to walk home, sometimes getting a lift from good-natured farmers, but oftener tramping miles and miles without any such opportunity.

This morning their last cent had gone for a couple of rolls apiece, and they had discussed with some heat whether Sandy should dispose of his watch. He had promised his grandfather to keep it always, and he had decided to keep his promise, and fight this business out. He frankly took the blame of the whole affair on his own shoulders.

"I'm the unluckiest guy you ever saw," he said ruefully. "I'm always getting into scrapes. Just this afternoon a fellow chased me off his wagon and

I hurt my foot. The dear knows what'll happen next. I can't move without doing some damage."

"Well, I ought to have known better myself," conceded Barney.

"It's tough luck," commented Bill, when the story was done. "But you made one big mistake right in the start: Y' ought never to have paid no railroad fare, that's wastin' good money. Beat your way, or hoof it; that's my motto every time."

"We're hoofin' it back, all right," sighed Barney ruefully.

A low whistle and the crackling of twigs from the direction of the woods attracted their attention.

"Why, that's my chum; I clean forgot all about him," exclaimed Bill, starting up uneasily as the undergrowth parted and a seedy looking youth shuffled towards them, a hatful of eggs in his hand. He stopped short when he saw the trio.

"Now what the——"

"That's all right, Tom," interrupted Bill hastily. "It's only two kids what's down on their luck. They're the goods, all right, and you don't need to get up on your ear at all."

Tom deposited the hat carefully in the crotch of a tree.

"Thought you was runnin' a blame kindergarten when I heard you back there," he growled, with an ugly glance in the direction of the boys. "Now what you think you're goin' to do with this outfit, anyway?"

"Nothin' at all," said Bill. "I guess the barn's big enough for us all, and it won't hurt if they bunk in with us for once."

"Not on your life; they don't bunk in where I am," snarled Tom, and the boys felt exceedingly uncomfortable.

Though young, he was a genuine tramp of the criminal variety, with narrow, shifty eyes, a coarse mouth and ragged, filthy clothing. A sudden thought seemed to strike him, for he added ungraciously:

"If they want to hang around with us they'll have to rustle for grub, and mighty quick, at that."

Bill looked relieved. "Sure they can," he agreed, and turning to the boys, added:

"Now, there's your chance, if you're hungry. There's a white house down the road a piece. If you strike the old woman you're in luck. The old man's a skinflint from the word go. You'd better go round by the road, for if you go through the fields you'll likely strike the old man at the barn. Then the next place is old Baldy's; you're sure to get something there."

"Don't you show your faces back here if you haven't grub enough for the bunch. It won't be good for you if you do," threatened Tom darkly.

The boys looked in each other's faces, conscious only of one overwhelming sensation, and that was hunger.

"Are you game?" asked Sandy briefly.

"Game? Gee, I'm starving," exclaimed Barney, jumping to his feet.

"Come on, then," cried Sandy, hopping off toward the road, followed by words of encouragement from Bill and foul-mouthed threats from Tom.

CHAPTER III

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGALS

THE two boys were coming up the long lane toward the white house slowly and hesitatingly, when a motherly looking woman in a blue dress and a white apron crossed the yard from the barn, with an empty dish in her hand, puzzling over the fact that her usually industrious hens had laid no eggs that day. Everything about the white house and the well-kept farm buildings betokened thrift and prosperity, while the fields on every side gave promise of a bountiful harvest.

Suddenly, with an exclamation, she shielded her eyes with her hand to get a better view of the two sorry-looking figures coming up the lane.

"Who on earth can they be?" she asked herself. "One is lame, and they're both poor. My, but they look neglected!"

If it had not been for dire hunger Sandy would have turned and fled even now. His cheeks were burning with shame as he thought of himself as a beggar and a companion of tramps. This was what his escapade had brought him to.

Barney's mood was not retrospective, however. He had always been sadly lacking in imagination, and he was only interested in what they would get to eat.

The woman waited for them, and as they drew near they forgot every word of the little speech they had been planning as they loitered up the lane. In the sweet face there was only kindness and encouragement, however, and before they knew it they were blundering in the midst of a confused statement of their errand.

"My days!" she interrupted, when she had listened for a moment. "Hungry, you say? Why, you poor lads, come away in, and I'll get you something to eat this minute. And you're walking all the way to Toronto, you say. My! My! That's too bad! Too bad!"

They followed her into a roomy kitchen, which was the picture of cheerfulness and comfort. After the manner of farmhouse kitchens the floor was painted yellow and the walls were white, but there were braided rugs on the floor, and the old-fashioned dresser was filled with rows of willow-patterned china. The mellow afternoon sunshine streaming over the tops of the potted plants in the open window rested on the picture of a boy on the opposite wall. It was an enlarged photograph in a cheap frame, and the boy, who was perhaps seven years of age, was dressed in kilts. Even Barney as he glanced at it was struck with the resemblance between the pictured face and that of the mistress of the house. There was the same broad forehead, back from which the hair waved luxuriantly, though the boy's was brown and the woman's white; the same dark eyes with the little sparkle in their depths, and the same delicately

chiseled nose and chin. Only the mouth was different; the one in the picture was irresolute and a little wilful, while the woman's was full of strength and kindness.

She took off her sunbonnet and put the empty dish in the pantry.

"Just sit down, and I'll get you something right away," she said cordially.

The boys obeyed shamefacedly, Sandy getting as near as possible to the chintz-covered armchair, where two kittens were rolled up together fast asleep; he needed some diversion to hide his embarrassment.

From a drawer in the dresser she brought out a coarse white cloth, and spread it over one end of the long table, and placed on it two plates and two cups. Sandy politely confined his attention to the kittens, which were awake now and ready for play, but Barney, his unkempt red hair sticking out in all directions, kept his eyes glued on his hostess's movements. A long-drawn sigh escaped him as she disappeared into the pantry. Every moment was an hour until she reappeared with a plate piled high with home-made bread in one hand and a platter of cold chicken in the other. This was followed by a plate of creamy biscuit and a jug of new milk. He began to count a hundred, and had just reached ninety-seven when her cheery "Sit in then, lads," made him jump.

What a meal that was! and how the biscuit and bread disappeared!

The mistress of the house hovered over them and urged them to have more and still more, until even Barney was forced to admit that he had had enough. Then she brought out a bottle of liniment and some old linen for a bandage, and proceeded to doctor Sandy's lame ankle with the deftness and tenderness of the born nurse. He told her the story of his accident and much more. It did not occur to him to tell anything but the truth, and her eyes were filled with concern.

A heavy footfall sounded on the piazza, and with a startled exclamation she hurried to the door. The boys heard her speak in a low tone and a hard voice raised sharply in reply.

"What's that you say? Feeding two tramps, eh? Why didn't you set the dogs on them, woman?"

"They're not tramps, James. They're just two boys—not bad boys, either."

"Boys be hanged! They're the worst kind of tramps. It's funny they know better than to come when there's a man around."

"They're on their way to Toronto. One of them is lame; he sprained his ankle to-day."

"Well, I'll sprain the other for him when I take this horsewhip to him."

"No, no, James! You mustn't touch these two poor lads. They're somebody's lads away from home and they've done no harm to anybody."

"That's enough, woman. Let me pass there and I'll get the truth out of them, I'll guarantee. Gosh, but women are soft!"

The woman's voice took on a new quality, and the Scottish accent, before barely noticeable, became very clear and broad as she repeated steadily:

"You'll be letting these two lads alone, I'm thinkin'. It is not you who'll be remembering it, but it's just fifteen years ago to-day since Donald went away. He wasn't many years older than these two lads that day, and we've never heard from him since. God grant that our boy has never gone hungry to anybody's door, and God grant if he has that nobody has—No, no, James! We'll be turnin' nobody's lad away this day——"

Her voice broke, and the two boys, sitting straight in their chairs with tense, startled faces, heard the man give a low, inarticulate exclamation and suddenly stride off towards the barn.

For a moment no one moved nor spoke, then she came in with the same quiet strength in her face, a shadow lurking in her eyes which was neither of pain nor tears, and yet which was akin to both.

"You're sure you'll not have something more?" she urged hospitably. "Then I'll just wrap up something for you to take along with you. You've a long road ahead of you between here and Toronto."

Suiting the action to the word she took what was left of the chicken and wrapped it in a newspaper, together with a loaf of bread, and pressed it upon them.

In broken words, and not without a suspicion of tears, they thanked her. Sandy told her he would

write to her, quite overlooking the fact that he did not even know her name.

"I'll be right glad to hear from you" she assured him, "and I'll be wanting to know that you've got back to your mothers. For oh, laddies, laddies! it's weary work for the mothers, waiting for the boys who never come home."

She turned quickly and went into the house, and they retraced their footsteps down the long lane in silence, a thousand new thoughts and emotions stirring in their young hearts. Before, their concern had been chiefly for themselves, and now for the first time they were truly disturbed for the trouble they had brought upon others.

It was not until they reached the foot of the lane that either of them remembered the two they had left on the bank by the creek.

"Gee! I don't want to see that bum again," exclaimed Barney with aversion.

"Neither do I, but where'll we go if we don't?" objected Sandy.

After a moment's discussion it was decided that they would return to the tramps. Any kind of human companionship was better than facing a night of loneliness in such strange surroundings.

They found the men impatiently awaiting their return. Tom greeted them with vile imprecations and rudely seized the parcel which Sandy carried under his arm.

He spread it out with exclamations of contempt, while Bill placidly smoked his black pipe. The eggs

had disappeared in their absence, and Tom proceeded to divide the bread and chicken into four parts. By tacit consent the boys had said nothing about having had supper. When he had divided it to his own satisfaction, he gave one part to Bill and coolly appropriated the other three himself.

"What you doin' there?" exclaimed Bill hotly. "Ain't ye goin' to give the kids nothin', ye pig?"

Tom gathered it all in the circle of his left arm and fell to with the unrestrained greed of an animal, vouchsafing only an inarticulate grunt in reply.

The boys showed their disgust, but did not look particularly disappointed, and Bill shrewdly guessed the truth regarding what had happened at the farm.

"He's a mean cuss; don't take no notice of him," he remarked casually. "But if you'll take a smoke you can have my pipe and tobaccy."

After supper they sat around and talked. While Tom smoked his tongue loosened and he gave himself up to an abandonment of coarse boasting. He had been a tramp and a jail-bird from childhood, and his point of view was utterly depraved and unclean. His stories seared like a hot iron the souls of the boys who listened, and they little guessed that in after life there would be moments when they would give worlds to obliterate the memory of that hour.

When dusk was settling into night they crossed the road, and on the other side of the bridge followed a cattle path for some distance along the bank of the creek, and then up a hill and half way across a field

to a barn standing by itself, with no other buildings near.

"They built a new bank barn last spring, so they keep this for second best," said Bill, speaking as a tailor, while they cautiously filed in and began to make their way up to the loft, after passing a pig-pen and stumbling over an antiquated cutting box.

The ladder was narrow and perpendicular, and Bill grunted and panted as he slowly drew himself up. They found the mow filled with straw and once there no one spoke, but each one sought out as comfortable a spot as possible and settled down to sleep. Instinctively the two boys drew apart from the others and lay close together.

To Sandy it was a night of unforgettable terrors: A night when for the first time in his life sleep refused to come at the moment his eyes closed. His ankle throbbed painfully, his head ached, and the tears persisted in coming, though he strove against them manfully. He lay awake for hours it seemed to him, while the others slept more or less audibly, starting up every now and then at the strange unaccountable noises breaking into the silence of the night. Something seemed to be swooping around in the darkness; and there were movements and occasional breathing just below them which spoke of unutterable possibilities.

Two or three weeks ago, Sandy in his new emancipation had given up saying his prayers, now he said every prayer he knew or had ever heard, adding a few words of petition on his own account. And

then thinking some of the thoughts of the prodigal son, he fell into a troubled sleep. Towards morning he awoke with a startled cry. Someone was bending over him in the darkness, a hand groped for an instant about his chest and then his watch was jerked from his pocket. He was wide awake now and jumping up threw out his arm to grab the intruder, who threw him back against Barney with a muttered oath and a heavy kick.

"Oh, he's got my watch, he's got my watch. Let's catch him!" he cried, scrambling up again. "Don't let him get away, Barney, do you hear!"

Barney yelled and made a grab, but he caught Sandy's lame foot in the darkness, causing him to howl with pain.

"What's the matter, younguns? What's the matter? Can't you sleep at night when you get a chance?"

It was Bill's voice, and he struck a match to see the cause of the trouble. By its flickering light no one could be seen but themselves.

"Somebody grabbed my watch," gasped Sandy. "It's gone, oh, oh! Let's get after him quick."

"Your watch, great Scott!—where's Tom?" shouted Bill, striking another match but in his excitement dropping it in the straw.

By this time Sandy and Barney had felt their way to the ladder and they heard Bill floundering around. Then there was a swish of the straw, a hoarse shriek, a thud, and an awful uproar among the pigs; Bill had fallen into the pig-pen through a hole in the loft.

"Oh, oh! help! help! I'm killed," he shouted while the pigs squealed frantically. "Hurry up and get me out or they'll eat me alive. Quick! quick!"

The boys stumbled down the ladder, as best they could in their excitement.

Pandemonium reigned in the pig-pen. The animals were frantic with fright; and Bill was too short, and fat, and too much battered up to climb out. He had carried down so much straw with him and had lit square on top of the pigs so that he was practically unhurt, though he did not know it yet. Just then they saw that the straw in the loft was afire where Bill had dropped his match.

There was not a moment to lose, but they must get Bill out.

"Can't you climb out, you duffer?" shouted Barney wildly, but Bill continued to howl and side step out of the way of the pigs. The barn was alight now from the fire, and Sandy espied a wooden mallet with which he attacked the boards of the pen, and in a few moments both Bill and the pigs came pouring out.

A mile away they sat down exhausted by the roadside and watched the burning barn, the boys too frightened and awestricken to utter a word; but Bill rubbed his sore shins and gulped out curses on the faithless Tom. The flames shot far up into the sky, but so far as they could see no one in the whole country side had seen the fire, for it was at that hour between midnight and dawn when weary country people sleep most soundly.

"I didn't know him, the measly pup—No, I didn't.

I only knowed him a week and I didn't think he was a crook like that; honest, I didn't," he protested weakly.

Sandy muttered an unintelligible reply. He was too bewildered and sick at heart to heed Bill's remarks.

"Yes, he did you dirty, a kid like you what never did him no harm, and you'll be blamin' it all onto old Bill, me that got stuck on you from the minute I clapped eyes on you cause you was true sports, you and red-head."

Sandy assured him that he held him blameless.

"I got what was coming to me, I guess," he said dully. "I'm up against it this time for fair."

"Jiminy, I near broke my neck in with that bunch of pigs; but say, we'd better hike it out of this. If anybody catches us around here they'll clap us in jail for that job," said Bill, hobbling off and nodding over his shoulder towards the fire which was dying down by this time.

The boys started on, for a faint streak of dawn was beginning to show itself in the east and they separated from Bill to face the most wearying day of all.

They had passed Hamilton the day before and now along the Lake Shore road they tramped painfully; sometimes getting a ride and twice stopping to pick strawberries for fruit farmers in payment for something to eat.

It passed at last as all days will even to the young and impatient, and late in the evening they found

themselves in the familiar neighborhood of home. At Barney's corner they found the little grocery closed, for it was after ten, but a single gas light was still burning. For an instant they paused across the street, then separated in characteristic fashion.

"Well, I guess I'll have to be going. So long, Barney."

"So long, Sandy; see you to-morrow."

"Huh, huh."

Sandy turned to look back just in time to see the door open and a little woman rush out crying, "Barney, my boy, my boy!" Then he went on his way alone with a feeble attempt at a whistle.

When he reached the imposing house standing back in the well-kept lawn, his heart sank and a great lump arose in his throat, for the door was closed for the night, and not a light showed in any of the windows.

Wearily he sank down on the steps of the piazza, his head resting in his hands, and his whole body drooping with exhaustion. He had not the courage to ring the bell and would wait till the milkman came in the morning he thought; then he could slip in when the maid opened the side door.

In the house everything was silent. Mrs. Merrill was asleep under the influence of an opiate after days and nights of heart-breaking anxiety. Mr. Merrill alone was awake. He had been looking for Sandy's return all day, for by use of the telegraph and long-distance telephone he had traced the movements of the runaways, and knew that they were headed for



FIRST AID DRILL

home. A wholesome lesson would not be bad for them, he thought, and declined to interfere. Now alone in the darkened library he was undergoing the lashings of an awakened conscience.

In the great manufacturing concern which bore his name, and which owed its success to his energy and his devotion to business, there was not a piece of machinery to which he had not given more thought than he had to his boy. He had never devoted a whole day to him in his life, knew nothing about his dreams or his companionships, and was hopelessly out of touch with him generally.

He stood with his elbow on the mantel, the soft breeze stirring the curtains and wafting in the fragrance of flowers and the subdued murmur of the city. His own boyhood had been one of toil and hardship, and there flashed upon his memory now an incident of his boyhood long forgotten. It was before dawn on an October morning on the old farm and he, a barefoot boy of fourteen, was creeping down the stairs and out to the back field to drive home the cows. The white frost lay thick on the ground, and by the time he reached the meadow his feet were stinging painfully. Then a big red cow got up from the ground; and he sprang on the warm spot, with a thrill and a glow which he could feel even yet—How he pitied the men who had no such memories. That morning he had planned to run away from home to see the great world, but had given it up because he was the eldest and was needed on the farm. Now he had gotten far away from the thoughts and feelings

of boyhood; and would need help, if ever he was to be a companion and a chum to his son.

The clock on the stair solemnly told out the hour of eleven, and was promptly followed by the pert little French clock on the mantel, as he walked restlessly into the hall and to the front door. He had been there many times before that evening, but now when he opened it a surging wave of joy overwhelmed him, for there, worn out and lame and ragged, was Sandy. Slowly he arose and faced his father. For a moment neither of them spoke. Then Mr. Merrill held out his hand, and uttered one word, "Sandy." It was enough. With a smothered cry Sandy stumbled forward, and placing his two hands on his father's shoulders, forgot in his wondering joy what a big boy he was, remembering only that he was home again safe, and in his father's arms.

The hour which followed, marked a new era for them both. Sandy found in his father a new attitude of sympathy and understanding, and soon poured out the whole story of his wanderings, keeping nothing back, and shouldering all the blame. Together they discussed the whole situation and agreed that things would have to begin all over again and that they must face the future as partners. They visited the silent kitchen, and made a raid on the pantry shelves, finding an array of good things which Sandy attacked with such vigor that he had to be dragged away before doing himself serious bodily harm. Then very quietly they stole upstairs, where with his own hands Mr. Merrill prepared the bath, and last of all took the boy to his mother.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN FATHER TAKES A HAND

TWO weeks had passed since his ill-starred adventure, and Sandy was very busy digging up the earth in a corner of the back yard while he cheerily whistled, "The Old Gray Bonnet." An answering whistle, and a succession of short, joyous yelps from the lane, told him that Barney and Ginger were approaching. As the gate opened to admit them he called out:

"Say, the world's coming to an end! My Dad's interested in baseball."

"Go on!"

"Sure thing, he's getting just crazy about it."

"How do you know?"

"Know! Gee, he doesn't do a thing but hunt out every speck of news he can find. You ought to hear him chin about the batting average of the big players and a lot of other sporty stuff."

"Gee!"

"Oh, he's got the bug all right. We went to the game, yesterday."

"What d'you think you're doin' there?" interrupted Barney, glancing at the upturned earth.

"Digging for fish worms. We're going fishing tomorrow, want to come?"

"Who's goin'?"

"Just Dad and me; he told me to ask you."

"No, I guess not. He won't want me along."

"Honest Injun; he told me to be sure and make you come."

"All right, give me a spade and I'll help dig," agreed Barney promptly.

"Here you are. Just drop them into this can; but listen, I've got the dandiest news to tell you—you'll never guess where I'm going?"

Barney shook his head, and attacked the hard earth. "Give it up," he said briefly.

"Did you ever hear of Camp Couchiching?"

"No, what is it?"

"Why, it's a boys' camp up on Lake Couchiching that Dad heard about. It belongs to the central Y. M. C. A. and he's going to send me there for all summer; I'm going next week. Isn't that swell?"

A twinge of envy shot through Barney's heart. All unknown to Sandy he had stood two or three times during the past week before the window of the boys' club on Yonge street where all the delights of the camp were pictured so alluringly. How he had wished he could go; but he bent his energies to the task of searching for the worms and made a non-committal reply.

"There'll be no end of fun," continued Sandy enthusiastically. "There's base ball and swimming and canoe trips, besides there'll be a lot of boy-scouts

there. Dad says I can join the scouts if I want to, and I know one thing, I'm going on a canoe trip."

Barney frowned as he pulled a couple of squirming victims from the shovelful of earth he had just turned over. "Gee, I'm sorry for you" he declared with emphasis.

"Who?"

"You. Say, you couldn't hire me to go there. No sirree, not if you offered me a thousand dollars."

"What for?"

"Huh, my mother makes me go to Sunday School once on Sunday and that's about enough for me."

"This is no Sunday School, you lobster!" exclaimed Sandy hotly.

"Taint, eh! Well, that's just where your Dad's foolin' you. He is getting you roped in this time all right, all right. Why, all these old codgers want you up there for, is to talk to you and pray with you from morning till night."

"Don't believe it!"

"Fact, it's dead slow up there, no fun at all. You got to get up at daylight and go to bed at dark, and when there's visitors you all stand up in a row and spout pieces."

"Oh, rats! you needn't get so sore because you're not going," retorted Sandy shortly. "Come on; we've got enough worms now; you think you know a whole lot, you do."

He picked up the can which Ginger was barking at and upsetting and started for the shed, followed by Barney who was still sullen.

"I'm not sore," he protested doggedly. "I don't care anything about your old camp. I'm mighty glad I'm not going, that's all."

"Well, I'm mighty glad I am, so there. I know a fellow who was there last year and he says it's great, if you want to know."

Barney was in the depths of black despair. It was as though Heaven had opened to Sandy while he was shut out, but he kept a brave countenance and continued to scoff.

He was quite unprepared for what happened the next day on their way home from their fishing trip. In the street car Mr. Merrill, who had proved himself a good fellow indeed and worthy of any boy's loyalty, remarked casually:

"I should like to have you go to camp with Sandy if it can be arranged. I will be responsible for all expenses and will see your mother about it; that is, if you would like to go."

Barney's feelings were too tumultuous for words. He floundered and stammered an unintelligible reply, but his glowing face told the whole story.

Sandy, to whom it was also a delightful surprise, was sorely tempted to remark: "Don't let him rope you in; it's dead slow up there;" but he forebore and merely thrust his hands deep into his pockets and with his eyes straight ahead of him whistled, "Has anybody here seen Kelly?" with such force and vim that

even the grouchy passenger smiled and said to himself, "Gracious! What it is to be a boy."

The decision to send Sandy to camp had been arrived at after considerable discussion, and some little divergence of opinion on the part of his parents.

It was characteristic of Mr. Merrill that when he was interested in a thing he was thoroughly interested. During the two weeks since the wanderer's return he had had much food for thought.

Sandy had returned to school meekly enough, but the summer vacation was at hand, with its abundance of idle time and its opportunities for good or evil.

"I wish I knew what to do with him," he had said to his wife the previous Sunday evening, when the matter was referred to as they walked home from church, "I really think the best thing would be to let him go out on a farm to work somewhere for the summer."

"What an absurd idea; I think the poor child has been punished quite enough without doing that," exclaimed Mrs. Merrill in a shocked tone, and quickened her pace as though to get away from the thought.

"It isn't a matter of punishment, but of character. I don't want him to have time enough to get into mischief," amended her husband patiently.

"Where could he be so safe as with his mother and sister in a first class hotel? Or where could he meet nicer people than at Jackson's Point?"

"Something a little more strenuous would be more in character, I imagine."

"Well I think that is what we ought to discourage. It would almost kill me to know that Sandy was playing foot ball or boxing, or any of those horrid things that boys do. I *know* he would get hurt, perhaps maimed for life. As for working on a farm; that would be really funny, but I know you don't mean it."

Mr. Merrill did not answer and the matter was dropped.

The next day, seated at his desk looking over his correspondence, he picked up a business communication from the Young Men's Christian Association. On the back of it was a "sticker" bearing the words "Have your boy spend his vacation at Camp Couchiching. Character building, Body building," etc., with directions where to apply for information and prospectus.

The idea appealed to him, and he immediately called up the telephone number and made an appointment with the Camp director.

He was an admirer of the Association's work, and for years had contributed liberally to its support, but had never had time to come in close touch with it. In the afternoon he visited the headquarters of the Boys' Club on Yonge street and found the whole atmosphere electric with enthusiasm for camp. As the opening day was close at hand, committees were hard at work. Consignments of goods were being prepared for shipment, and boys of all sizes and ages,

with their parents, were adding to the gayety of nations by besieging the director's office, to propound questions which for the most part had been answered dozens of times in prospectuses and in letters. The most urgent appeal seemed to be on behalf of boys who were under age, thirteen being the age limit for boys admitted to camp.

One fashionably dressed mother, with a red-haired boy of eleven in tow, coolly announced that her passage to Europe had been engaged, and as she had no other place to leave Jim, he just had to go to camp. She had telephoned several times about the matter, and had now come in person to assure the director that there must be no question about it.

There was none, for she emerged from the office smiling and triumphant.

Jim would be ready to go with the party, she said, for his outfit was already purchased and his trunk packed. Jim walked with his head up, and his chest thrown out, looking neither to the right nor to the left, in the hope that no one would suspect that he was the smallest boy going to camp.

At the head of affairs, his face glowing with enthusiasm, now found in the office and again in the furthestmost part of the building, guiding, directing, enthusing was the "Big Chief," the secretary of the club, and the maker of the camp. Once in the dark ages before he took hold of the club he had had another name, but that was forgotten long ago, and except on formal occasions the boys only knew him by

the title of affection and respect they had given him themselves.

Mr. Merrill found him in the office dictating letters, answering queries through the telephone, and by means of messengers, directing half a dozen different activities throughout the building. But he found time to give unhurried attention to Sandy's case and was as greatly interested as if there had not been another boy within a hundred miles. He was a young man, still in the twenties, and as Mr. Merrill looked into the alert, eager face, the eyes filled with the light of a great purpose, he felt that here was a man who had stood face to face with all a boy's problems; who had fought the hardest battles a boy has to fight and had not forgotten. He could safely confide Sandy to his care. The details were soon arranged, and he went away with a feeling of immense relief.

That had all happened several days ago, and now that the boys were let into the secret, little else was thought of, or talked of, but camp.

The idea of sending Barney had come as an after thought, and his mother raised slight objection to his accompanying Sandy when Mr. Merrill interviewed her on the subject. Her younger boy had learned to do the errands pretty well, and as Mr. Merrill had offered to meet every expense she was grateful for Barney's opportunity.

As only two or three days remained, there was a great scurrying for camp uniforms and other requisites.

Sandy was so excited, and so noisy that the household was driven to distraction.

Besides the regulation outfit required by camp rules, he had a list of his own which included everything from a trolling-spoon and a hunting knife, to a shot gun and a folding canvas canoe, and was deeply disappointed when he had to give up everything but the first.

His mind was fairly rioting in anticipation of canoe trips, camp fires and scout games, and he wondered if anything really worth while would happen, such as getting lost in the woods or being captured—but then, pshaw—there were no real wild Indians nowadays.

It was a great moment when he arrayed himself in the camp uniform for the first time; gray flannel shirt, long khaki trousers, running shoes, and although the day was sweltering hot, a gray and red sweater-coat bearing the crest of the Central Young Men's Christian Association. He surveyed himself with a deep breath of satisfaction, in the mirror and then started downstairs to look for his mother and Alice, but they had gone out, and he rushed into the kitchen to exhibit himself to Norah, who was deep in the mysteries of gooseberry jam.

"Well, and what have yuh got on yuh now?" she demanded, as she turned around and eyed him disapprovingly.

"This is my camp suit, Norah. How do you like it?"

"Indade, and it's no beauty, thin."

"Oh, go on, I think it's just swell. Just get on to the long trousers, will you?"

"Them yaller things?"

"Sure, that's the best part of the whole outfit. It's khaki. Everybody in camp is to be dressed alike," said Sandy, diving his hands into the pockets and strutting around to show them off to better advantage.

Norah stirred her jam and cast another glance in his direction.

"And what does them letters on your ganzy stand for?" she asked.

"That's no 'ganzy,' that's a sweater-coat. T. C. stands for Toronto Central—and——"

Norah dropped her spoon into the boiling jam. "Glory be to Peter! Is that where they're sendin' yuh now?" she cried. "Drat them, I might have knowed it. Sure, I know they're all dressed alike there. I went one time to see a b'y from the County Clare that I knowed at home. He was in for three years, and yuh couldn't have told one from the other of thim. They was like as peas in a pod. Their hair was clipped and——"

Sandy interrupted her with a shout. "Aw, Norah, now where do you think I'm going?" he demanded.

"To the Cintral, yuh said it yourself."

"That's one on you. It's Toronto Central Y. M. C. A., not Central Prison. What did you think I was going to jail for?"

Norah surveyed him from head to foot, and then

with a toss of her head, which did not altogether hide the twinkle in her eye, she said:

"Indeed and there's no tellin' with the likes of yuh, but come here, till I show you something, and now mind, don't yuh tell a single soul."

She led the way into the pantry with an air of mystery, and lifting a substantial looking box from an upper shelf, remarked: "I'm going to see that you don't starve this trip, jail or no jail."

She lifted the lid and revealed to Sandy's delighted gaze a collection of good things which made his mouth water. There was a large fruit cake, thick with the whitest of icing, a batch of cookies, a box of fudge and a chocolate layer cake.

"That's to go in your trunk last thing, and if they don't feed yuh well, just let me know and I'll send yuh more," she said, and snapped the lid down quickly lest he might try to sample them before the time.

"Norah, you're a brick," he declared admiringly. "I won't forget you for this, you bet."

"Aw, go on with yuh, now, and let me git on with me work. Out of this with your yaller breeches, I say."

With a shout Sandy was gone, and Norah returned to her work, a softened expression on her grim face.

"Indeed, and the house 'll just be dead widout the little divil," she sighed, and wiped her eyes with a corner of her apron.

At the last moment, when his trunk had been packed and the expressman was expected at any mo-

ment, Sandy was alone, and he stood hesitating for just an instant. Then he dived under the wardrobe and brought out a package which he quickly deposited deep in the furthestmost corner of the trunk beside his little Bible, before locking it. He did not feel altogether happy about it when he thought of his father, but how could he face the scorn of the true sports in camp if he did not smoke cigarettes or play a game of cards or craps? His father could not understand—anyway he would not know.

CHAPTER V

THE MURDERER

THE antiquated old union station at Toronto has been the scene of many a tumultuous greeting and farewell, but never has it harbored more thrills than on the morning when the boys went to camp.

When Sandy and Barney arrived, each armed with a lunchbox and a paddle, they found it full to overflowing, for though the train was an early one, each of the seventy boys was accompanied by several fond relatives, and the Chief was besieged with warnings and instructions regarding his lively charge.

"Be sure and see that Henry does not sleep in damp clothes."

"Don't let Alfred run too much."

"Please try and straighten Harold's round shoulders."

"John is careless in his table manners. Be strict with him, please."

The Chief tried to pigeon hole these requests in his mind for future reference, and in most cases was successful.

Sandy was undisturbed when he saw his father greet the Chief cordially and pause for a few words with him, but when his mother, with the look in her

face which he knew so well, edged her way through the crowd in that direction, he felt exceedingly uncomfortable. He was not near enough to hear her words, but he watched her dejectedly as she opened the conversation, and then as a sudden onslaught from several other anxious parents swept her off her feet before the Chief could reply, he wanted to cheer.

Barney's hard-working little mother was content to simply watch for the last glimpse of her boy, and turn away with tear-dimmed eyes, no one in that well-dressed, comfortable throng guessing the sacrifice she was making that Barney might have his chance.

At last the train moved off amid the shouts of the boys, and the farewell waving of handkerchiefs from the parents.

"Gee, I'm glad that's over, anyway. I hate fuss!" exclaimed Barney, as he tugged at a refractory window to open it.

Sandy did not answer. He was looking from one to the other of the men and boys who were to be his companions for the next few weeks, and who seemed to know each other so well. They had the last car in the train to themselves and as they sped out of the city limits, and farther into the country, the spirits of the party rose higher and higher. As mile after mile piled up the distance between them and the commonplaces of everyday life, the very wheels under the car seemed to sing of freedom and adventure.



REVERSION TO TYPE

Suddenly Sandy caught sight of two familiar faces at the further end of the car.

"There's Harvey Jameison down there, and Jim Phillips. Isn't that great!" he cried, delighted to see the faces of two old acquaintances.

"Sure, so it is. What togger's that Harvey's got on?"

"That's the boy scout uniform; I never knew he belonged."

"Neither did I," returned Barney, as he excitedly bolted down the aisle. "Hey, there, you Harvey, don't you know a fellow?"

A tall boy of sixteen, with a thoughtful face and an expansive smile, looked back. "Why, hello, Barney," he exclaimed, jumping to his feet. "I didn't know you were coming to camp, and Sandy too. Say, that's great!"

He and Jim Phillips joined them in the double seat and there were many questions to be asked and answered.

"How long are you fellows going to stay?" asked Harvey.

"To the end of camp if we want to," said Sandy.

"You'll want to, all right."

"Have you ever been before?"

"You bet. This is my fourth year. I wouldn't miss it for a farm," replied Harvey, whose camp nickname it turned out, was "Tim."

"Mine too," said Jim Phillips, while Sandy and Barney looked in awe upon such ripe experience.

"When did you join the scouts?" demanded Sandy.

"Three months ago. I'm leader of our patrol."

"Phew, but that's a dinky suit you've got on. Do you suppose I could join up at camp?"

"You might. Why don't you speak to the Chief about it?"

"I will. I'll do it this very day," declared Sandy emphatically. Down deep, in his heart of hearts, to be a real scout had always been his dearest wish; detective had only been second choice.

At this juncture two other boys of fifteen joined them and were introduced as Billy Browne and "Fat" Wolcott. Both had been at camp before, and were eager to give all the information possible to the newcomers.

"Do you know what tent you are going to be in?" asked Jim Phillips.

"No, never thought of it," said both boys in a breath.

"Well, it doesn't matter much. The Chief 'll fix you up all right."

"We didn't know anything about the tents. How do you work it?" asked Sandy.

"Why, there's a tent for every six or eight fellows and a leader. You kind of like to get in with the bunch you pull with best, because it makes it easier in the long run when everybody works for the honor of their tent. You see it's this way; every point you make through the day counts so much for

your tent, and the tent that gets most points one day flies the honor flag the next."

"Oh!"

"So you see it's up to every fellow in the tent to do his best."

"How do you get the points?"

"Oh, for almost everything. For instance, when the bugle blows in the morning for everybody out of tents, the tent that has a full turn-out gets twenty-five points. If there isn't a full turn-out, there's five points off for every fellow absent. Then there are five points for every fellow on a winning team. In fact, it's points on or points off all day. So if you work hard yourself. You don't want the other guys losing points for you."

"That's right."

"Do you know any of the leaders?" asked Billy Browne.

"No, we don't know anybody," returned Barney with a sigh.

"Well, say, we've got the classiest bunch of leaders this year you ever saw. See that tall fellow over there? Yes, the one in the end seat talking to the two scouts. That's Bob Sparling, the champion mile runner of Canada. Then two seats this way is Jack Carewe, the Marathon runner. You ought to know them from their pictures in the papers."

Barney wriggled in his seat with delight.

"Gee, we're all right!" he exploded.

"You bet, and talk about champions. Why, we've got boy champions to burn here. There's the cham-

pion boy fencer, the champion boy swimmer and a dozen other kids just strung with medals."

"Gee!"

"Yes, and about the leaders," remarked Harvey. "There's Adams, the scout master. I'm to be in his tent. He's all to the good, I can tell you. Jerry Walker and Dad Farrington are old standbys. Camp wouldn't be camp without them. And Griswold. Say, you ought to know Griswold, Sandy. Maybe you could get into his tent. That's him in the aisle talking to Chief."

Sandy glanced curiously in the direction indicated. "Why, he's no leader," he asserted promptly. "He's one of the boys; anybody can tell that."

"Guess again," laughed Harvey. "He isn't as young as he looks. I'll bet he's twenty-seven if he's a day."

"Go on!"

"Sure thing. He's been a missionary or something of that sort out west. He graduated from some college out there two or three years ago and has been working in railroad construction camps and in the lumber woods and mines ever since, until he came to Toronto. He's going back soon to do Y. M. C. A. work, I think."

Sandy saw a slim young fellow, with a boyish face and wavy brown hair, his eyes sparkling with interest in the matter he was discussing with the Chief.

"He looks like a kid," he sniffed and turned his attention the other way.

"Oh, look here!" broke in "Fat" Wolcott,

"since you folks are in the business of introducing leaders you mustn't forget the Admiral."

"Great Scott, no, that would never do," cried Billy Browne. "Behold him there, administering rebuke to two unlucky kids. They've forgotten to give him the proper salute, I'll bet a cent. There, didn't I tell you. He's making them give the full salute. He's an assistant scoutmaster now, and he can't forget it. He certainly is the limit."

"What do you call him Admiral for?" asked Barney.

"Oh, he seems to know a good deal about sailboats. Lived by the sea in England, I think. The fellows have been out sailing with him quite a lot."

"He isn't a bad sailor, but he's a bum scout," said Harvey with a grin.

"Well, take my word for it, the Chief's drawn a lemon for once," nodded "Fat" sagely.

"Wherever you see him you may safely bet he's talking about scout work," continued Harvey. "He never talks about anything else. He has studied the book *Scouting for Boys* until he knows it by heart, but set him down in a ten-acre woods and he wouldn't know how to get out of it."

The young man in question was very tall, very stout and very pompous, and moved restlessly about from one group to another, giving information or reproof as occasion required. He was apparently about twenty-two, and was dressed in full scoutmaster's uniform, every detail of which bore evidence to having been donned for the first time. That he took

himself seriously there was no doubt, but only the younger boys were at all impressed.

The talk about Sandy and Barney shifted to camp reminiscences and plans for the future, and presently the group dispersed.

The day was hot and the car stuffy, but that did not dampen the spirits of the party. At every stopping place club yells and popular songs awoke the echoes, and apprised the natives that Camp Couchiching was once more on the move.

Someone had an original song which caught the popular ear at once, and soon the whole car was singing with a vim:

In dear old Toronto
We used to sing,
But life is sweeter at Couchiching.
We eat big dinners,
Swim, row, and play,
And we grow fatter
The live-long day.

Couchiching, Couchiching,
Toronto Y. M. C. A.
On the job both night and day,
Couchiching, Couchiching.

The high good humor of the party was infectious, and as the train drew out from a station it invariably left behind it a group of smiling faces. Many a man who had been grumbling at the weather and things in

general, turned to his work with a song, forgetting the heat and discomfort, and remembering only that it was good to be alive.

There was much running back and forth in the car and eating of lunches, much exchanging of camp stories and planning for the future.

The train was a leisurely one, stopping at every station, and was the subject of many jokes and some complaint. Once it stopped with a sudden jerk where there was not even a way station.

"This is where the engineer and fireman stop to swap chaws with the farmer in the next field," cheerfully remarked a boy who had been down to the water-cooler for the fourteenth time.

A solemn looking youth who had been immersed in a book most of the morning, looked up casually and said:

"Well, you just wait till we get a little farther on, where we go so slow that they have to turn the cow-catcher around and put it on the back, to keep the cows from climbing onto the train to bite the passengers."

It was the first remark he had volunteered in an hour and a half, and it was met with howls of derision. A dozen boys jostled around him at once.

"Oh! Oh! Wait till we get to Jackson's Point. It'll be the drink for yours," they cried. "We could never let you off with a joke like that. It's so old that it's got whiskers."

The joker coolly extricated himself from the entangling hands and feet. "Pitch me in as soon as

you like ; I'm hot enough to stand it," he agreed, and returned to his book once more, deaf to challenges and threats.

Fifteen minutes later, at Rossville station, a most exciting incident occurred, and one which had special interest for Sandy and Barney.

As the train drew into the little station it was seen that an excited crowd surged all around it. People pushed and shoved, and necks were craned, as on tip-toe they tried to get a view of something which was not yet apparent from the train. The boys leaned out of the windows, eager to see if it was a fight or only a Sunday School picnic. Sandy noticed the stern faces of the crowd as the train came to a standstill, and wondered what it was all about. Then the door of the station flew open. The crowd parted, and three men walked out side by side. The one in the center, a cowed, villainous looking creature, with shuffling gait and eyes which shot furtive glances from side to side, was handcuffed, and on each side of him was a burly county constable. It took them but an instant to reach the train, but it was enough for Sandy to recognize the prisoner.

"O-oh, look, Barney, look! It's Tom!" he cried aloud, his face grown white with agitation.

The prisoner heard, and his evil eyes flashed recognition as he was hustled into the next car. Then the train started on its way and the boys looked in each other's faces. What did it all mean?

When Sandy drew his head in, he found the Chief beside him.

"What is it? What has he done?" he cried excitedly. "He's the fellow that stole my watch, and I want it!"

"How did he come to steal your watch? Sit down and tell me about it."

Sandy's eyes fell, and he made no reply. How could he tell the Chief about that miserable night? But he looked up and found the dark eyes boring straight through him, and it seemed to him, finding out his innermost secrets.

"It was when I ran away from home," he faltered. "We were sleeping in a barn. There were two tramps. This fellow and another one. The other one was on the square, but this—this bum stole my watch, and got away with it."

The Chief was full of interest. "You were lucky only to lose your watch," he said impressively. "Have you seen to-day's papers?"

"No, sir."

"Look at this, then," he said, producing a *Morning Globe*. The boys looked over the page he indicated and found a picture of Tom, together with an account of the cold-blooded murder of an aged farmer and his wife.

The whole countryside was wrought up over it, and the murderer was soon captured. He was now on his way to the jail in the county town, where he would be tried.

"You had better telephone to your father when you get to camp, and he will know what steps to take regarding the watch," advised the Chief. "Now

Tim Jameison has been speaking to me about putting you fellows in with Griswold. I think that will be a good arrangement. The other fellows are about your age, and they're fine fellows, all of them. Come now, and I will introduce you."

"Griswold, here are two of your boys whom I want you to meet; Sandy Merrill and Barney Allen. They will be with you right through camp, I hope."

Hugh Griswold turned eagerly, and before the introduction was finished had grasped them each warmly by the hand.

"My boys," he repeated with emphasis. "Now doesn't that sound good? Do you know I have just been wondering who among all these boys were to be with me during the next few weeks. I know two or three, but had no idea who the others were to be. Sit down and let us get acquainted."

He led the way to an empty seat as he talked.

"You see, I have never been to camp before," he continued, seating himself opposite to them. "And so all these old campers have the advantage of me, but I've been doing my best to learn all about it."

Sandy leaned forward, the light of hope dawning in his face. Here was somebody after all who did not know everything.

"Can you swim?" he whispered confidentially.

Hugh Griswold was gifted with understanding, and he merely nodded and said, "Yes, I can now, I couldn't when I was your age though." Then as an afterthought he added, "The man who is to teach swimming this year is the best in the country."

Sandy drew a deep breath as he sat back, and Griswold changed the subject. Soon they were laughing and chatting as gayly as if they had known one another always. Griswold was a born story-teller, and every little incident, as he told it, was alive with interest.

A little later, Sandy sought out Harvey Jameison.

"I say, Harvey," he said eagerly, "I think that was real decent of you, to speak to Chief for us."

"Oh that wasn't anything," laughed Harvey. "I was just brushing up my Camp Couchiching spirit, that was all."

"What's your Camp Couchiching spirit? I've heard several people talking about it to-day."

"Well, it's time you knew about it. It's the spirit of 'help the other fellow' and let me warn you right here, that you're supposed to be so chock full of it that if anybody jolts you it spills right over."

"Huh! I think I see it."

"It's a fact. I tell you there's no end to the things you two kids have got to learn, but never mind you'll——"

The sentence was never finished. There was a sudden awful crash, the indescribable roar of splintering timbers, twisting steel, and shattering glass, mingled with the hoarse cry of horror from many throats. Boys were thrown about with irresistible force, while the car careened violently from side to side. Then the long train was still, a broken and twisted thing, in the midst of a strip of woodland, three miles from the nearest station.

CHAPTER VI

THE WRECK

THE hot sun beat pitilessly down upon the scene of the wreck, as the boys with blanched faces stumbled into the open air, many of them bruised and badly shaken, but not one seriously hurt, owing to the fact that they were in the rear car. They were dazed at the sight that confronted them outside.

The engine and baggage car were in the ditch, mixed up with part of a freight train into which they had run. The other coaches were derailed and partly overturned.

The freight train had become stalled owing to a broken coupling, and a man had been sent back to flag the oncoming passenger just one minute too late. The engineer was dead, with his hand at the throttle.

With the exception of two or three men from the freight train there was not an employe who was not among the injured. The overturned coaches were filled with suffering humanity, and their cries called for instant action.

The Chief's vehement "Come on, fellows," was not needed, in fact, few heard him. The need was so great, that it appealed to every man and boy there. It was "Toronto Central to the rescue" and everybody turned in to help.

The first car was so jammed, that there was no way out except through the windows. As this was one of the old type of passenger coaches, with small windows, it made the work of rescue doubly difficult.

John Farrington, otherwise known as "Dad," solved the difficulty by securing the ax from the rear car, and by a few mighty strokes, broke a way through. Here were the most desperately wounded, utterly unable to help themselves. Some of them were women and little children, and they had to be lifted out and cared for until help arrived. A few had gone beyond the need of earthly help, and their bodies were laid reverently side by side, in the long grass.

For the first time in his life, Sandy was wholly devoted to the service of others. He had a bruised shoulder and Barney's wrist was sprained, but neither of them knew it.

Sandy's coat went under the head of an injured girl, and he worked untiringly under Jerry Walker's direction, breaking off cedar boughs to screen the wounded from the heat of the sun. He saw the young men working in frantic haste, but did not know that it was fear of fire that was urging them on to such superhuman effort.

"Look who they've got now!" exclaimed Barney, pointing to the second car, where the Chief was in command.

Sandy looked up from his work, and saw Tom being bundled out of the car. He was still handcuffed, but otherwise unscathed.

The Chief stared at this unexpected find with a

new sense of responsibility. He had forgotten all about the prisoner. Both constables were disabled, and had to be cared for, and now someone must be detailed to look after the prisoner.

The Chief's lips tightened. It was just like a fellow like that, to escape without a scratch, he thought impatiently.

There was John Farrington, the strong man of camp; he would give him into his care, he decided.

"Call Dad," he said to the nearest boy.

"Dad, can you take this fellow, and guard him till he is taken off our hands?" he asked quickly, as Farrington hurried over, wiping the beads of perspiration from his face.

Dad's countenance fell. "Yes, I suppose so," he said reluctantly, "but I wish you would get someone else; I am needed badly back there. Fire may break out at any minute in spite of our precautions."

The Chief looked perplexed. Griswold, Jerry Walker, Adams, and every other leader, and big boy, was needed for the work of rescue.

Jack Carewe was off on a three-mile dash for the nearest station, and Bob Sparling, as a third year medical man, was in charge of the first aid corps. Not one of them could be spared. Then his eye fell on the Admiral, who had been sputtering about on the outer edge of things, his khaki uniform still immaculate.

"Crawford," he called peremptorily, "I want you to take this man as your prisoner. He is a danger-

ous criminal, and you are now responsible for him. You will govern yourself accordingly."

The Admiral looked as though he wanted to remonstrate, but instead turned sullenly to the prisoner, who was standing like a hunted animal, inwardly cursing the handcuffs which bound him. They took each other's measure at a glance, and the result was a feeling of contempt on both sides. Tom cast his eyes to the ground, to hide the gleam of hope that shot up into them, while the Admiral ordered him to a spot near the overturned engine and freight cars, where there was a patch of shade. Sandy glanced at them with keen interest from time to time, in the intervals of his coming and going on errands for the rescuers. He wished he could get at the truth concerning his watch. For twenty minutes, he saw them always in the same position, Tom blinking stupidly in the sun; while the Admiral sat haughtily erect in the shade of a maple sapling. Then half a dozen boys gathered around, and the Admiral sprang to his feet.

"It's dashed nonsense, nothing but dashed nonsense," he exploded. "What do they think I am, a policeman? My word, but I feel flattered."

He strode up and down, airing his outraged dignity, while the prisoner scowled darkly at the intruders. They saw it, and were all the more content to stay. They were a group who had been around the Admiral a great deal during the morning, and were very much at home with him. They were not anxious for work, and were not averse to mischief, even under these tragic circumstances. In a few minutes

they had the Admiral deep in a discussion of semaphore signaling.

Sandy stood still to watch them; then he heard Griswold's voice.

"Sandy, we need some water badly," he said. "The trainmen say that you will find a creek on the other side of the woods, to the right. It is at the foot of a steep bank. Here is a pail, and be as quick as you can."

Sandy sprang to obey. "I'll be back right away," he called back as he hurried down the track, and over the fence into the woods. He hastened through the cool woods, swinging the red pail, until he came to the bank. He found it a steep one, with a narrow rivulet singing along at the bottom. When he got down, he found that the pail was too large to be of any use in dipping up the water. He wished that he had remembered to bring the tin cup from the rear car. Then he thought of his cloth cap, and dipped the water up with it. It was a slow process, and he knelt in the soft moss where the water was the deepest, patiently filling his cap and then whisking it into the pail.

When it was accomplished, he started up the bank again, but he found this a much harder task than going down. The pail was heavy, and there seemed no safe footing anywhere.

Little by little, however, with infinite care, he got safely up, without spilling a drop of the precious water.

At the top, he set it down for a moment to rest his

aching shoulder, of which he was just beginning to be aware. How beautifully cool and peaceful everything was. It was a pine woods covered thickly with a rich, brown, carpet of needles. The wind whispered through the tops of the trees and the birds sang as gaily, as if there had not been a tragedy within a hundred miles of it.

True to his nature, Sandy was all at once carried away with the romance of it. As he picked up his pail, he was a scout trying to make his way through an enemy's country, and he must do it as silently, and as quickly as possible. In his enthusiasm over this idea he glided from tree trunk to tree trunk, carefully avoiding anything which might crackle under foot, and screening himself behind underbrush wherever he found it.

So real did the idea become to him, that as he neared the edge of the woods, he found himself straining his ears to hear the footfall of a possible enemy.

He was near the track now, screened behind a low undergrowth of cedar, when he stopped and listened.

Yes, surely he heard stealthy movements. Why should he be afraid? He could not tell, and yet his heart beat faster, and an unaccountable fear took possession of him.

He set the pail down and waited. Once more he heard it. A rustling among the leaves, then swift footsteps coming straight upon him. Bracing himself to meet it, he stepped out, and found himself face to face with—Tom.

For a second they stood, as though turned to

stone, looking into each other's faces, the murderer's face bearing a snarl, like an animal ready to spring. Then Sandy realized what had happened. The man was escaping. At that instant he forgot every other consideration. This thief and murderer must not get away.

With a great cry for help, he hurled himself upon him, hoping to bear him down. Tom's hands were still manacled, but he was a giant of brute strength, and he was desperate. Sandy got his arms about his neck, and held on, shouting, in hopes that someone would come. Tom hissed awful curses, and then Sandy felt his hot breath on his neck, and his teeth sinking into his quivering shoulder.

He grew faint with the pain, and then he was torn from his hold, and dashed with terrific force against something, he knew not what. After that everything was dark.

When he came to himself, someone was bathing his head with cold water, and he opened his eyes to see Hugh Griswold bending over him. For a moment he could not remember. Then it all came back to him and he tried to sit up. The throbbing pain in his head made him sink back, but he asked in eager tones:

“Did he get away?”

Griswold smiled reassuringly. “No, sirree, he did not,” he answered emphatically. “Thanks to you, we got him.”

Sandy closed his eyes with a feeling of relief, and Griswold continued:

“You see he slipped away while those—while the Admiral was giving the boys some instruction in signaling. He had just been missed, and the fellows were out searching for him when we heard you. You did the work of a man to-day, always remember that.”

Sandy looked up into the fine sensitive face, so boyish, because so full of human enthusiasm, and felt a wave of joy sweep over him, such as he had never known before. “A man’s work!” he certainly would remember all his life.

“I must get up,” he said, and struggled to his feet, just as Barney swept down upon him.

His head had struck a tree, and was aching painfully, and his shoulder was bleeding, where the wretch’s teeth had torn him, but he managed to walk back to the scene of the wreck, just as the relief train came in.

Doctors were there with aid of all kinds, and soon the wounded and suffering were on board and being properly cared for. The murderer was kept under strict guard, with no chance of escape and soon they were on their way once more.

Sandy found himself something of a hero, which embarrassed him considerably, but he was glad that everybody seemed to know him now, and that made things easier.

CHAPTER VII

AT CAMP

AS the gray dawn was stealing over Camp Couchiching the next morning, the first object to take form out of the surrounding darkness was the solidly built pavilion, with its offices, kitchen, and dining hall. It stood on slightly elevated ground, and looked out from the office side over the running-track, enclosing the big athletic field, and on the other, to the tennis and volley ball courts.

From the end of the dining hall where the broad steps led down to the open field, could be seen the dim outlines of the tents standing in a ghostly semicircle, and behind them the somber depths of the wooded point, running out into Lake Couchiching, for something less than a quarter of a mile.

Gradually the darkness vanished, and the sun all red with the promise of a hot day, shot beams of fire through the fringe of elm and maple to the east of the camp.

Down in the woods, a regiment of bob-tailed young crows were sitting in straight lines on branches, listening to instructions from their elders, regarding this new invasion of their domains. There was much open-mouthed wonder, and caw-cawing from the younger set, as one wise old crow, the colonel of the regiment,

informed them that these wild looking creatures soon to emerge from the white tents, and known to humans as boys, were perfectly harmless, so far as crows were concerned: whereat the bobtails set up a deafening caw-cawing, which was crow for three cheers and a tiger. They had learned that all boys were not enemies.

Another irregular troop moved on the camp at dawn. They used guerilla tactics, and their object was plunder. Even the youngest baby red squirrel needed no instructor to tell him where candy and cake boxes were to be found unguarded.

While the boys slept, they industriously removed everything eatable that they could find.

Just as the sun was climbing to where it could look over the tops of the trees, a man stepped out from one of the tents, and walking over to the front of the pavilion, blew three sharp blasts on a slender brass horn.

Instantly the camp was awake. Never, in all its history had it slept so late on its opening morning.

As a matter of fact, it had just rightly settled down to sleep. The unusual occurrences of the day before, and the consequent late arrival in camp, were the causes of this unprecedented stillness on a first morning.

But there was no dawdling in getting out of the tents at least. Everyone was too anxious to get their first glimpse of Camp Couchiching by daylight. Out of every tent poured a group of pajama-clad figures, and at the third signal from the man with the

horn, there was a general rush for the athletic field for the setting-up exercise.

Sandy was stiff from his experience of yesterday, his shoulder was sore, and his head still ached some, but he would not have missed it for anything.

It was a beautiful world he looked upon this morning. The fields, the woods, the glistening crescent of white tents, and the shimmering waters of Lake Couchiching, all flooded with golden sunlight. The boys, too, were as frisky as young colts, but they got quickly into line under orders from the physical director. The exercise was altogether new to Sandy, and he tried in vain to touch the ground without bending his knees.

"Now wouldn't that jar you!" exclaimed Barney disgustedly, as he also strained his muscles to do the impossible.

"I don't see how those kids manage it anyway," grunted Sandy in reply.

"Aw, look at me, you little sawed-off, and tell me what you'd do if you had as far to go as I have."

Sandy turned quickly to the speaker, who was directly behind him, and saw the tallest and thinnest boy he had ever beheld. He was about sixteen, and had a whimsical, good-natured face.

"It's a regular cinch," he asserted, and proceeded to describe a half circle with his arms, and laid his hands palms downward on the ground, without bending a joint.

"Now don't you care, Sandy. You'll get it with

practice. Skin Lightwood is made of India rubber anyway," comforted Jim Phillips, as they fell into line for the morning dip.

This was simply in and out again. The brave spirits rushing headlong for the springboard at the end of the long dock for a dive, while the more timid ones slid off the sides, where they could touch bottom. In a moment it was over, and they were racing back to the tents to dress, their bodies tingling with new life and vigor.

Fortunately their baggage had been sent in a car attached to another train, and had not been affected by the wreck. So camp uniforms were extricated from trunks and donned for the first time with ill concealed pride, especially by the new boys.

"There's nothing wrong with me, you bet; my clothes are the dead cut of Mr. Griswold's," exulted Barney to himself, as he gave his trousers a hitch and reached for his hair-brush.

The man with the horn was untiring, and at his next signal Bibles were brought out, and seated on bunks or on the floor the boys gathered for the morning watch.

"I don't know how you feel about it, fellows, but the hundredth psalm strikes me just right this morning," said Griswold as he opened his Bible.

Together they read that most joyous of all psalms and then there was an interval of silent prayer.

There was no comment, but somehow there came to each boy the feeling that God was wonderfully interested in them, and in their good times.

The next call was to line up for breakfast, and was greeted with an acclaim, before which all other enthusiasms of the morning faded.

This line-up before each meal was a time-honored institution at camp. Visitors were always impressed with it. The boys were so prompt in getting there, and everybody looked so hopeful.

At last they were streaming into the pavilion, their already vociferous appetites sharpened by the fragrant aroma of breakfast, floating out from the kitchen.

A stranger that morning would have been struck with the fact that everything went as smoothly as if camp had been under way for a week. There was not a hitch anywhere. Mr. Adams was the officer of the day. He it was whose horn had regulated every movement of the camp so far.

The stranger would not know that the leaders had been in training for weeks, and that under the Chief's direction every detail had been arranged for and understood. The leaders were working as one man, with possibly one exception, and the spirit of "help the other fellow" was everywhere apparent.

Seated at table, Sandy and Barney looked about them with interested eyes. Each tent had its own table, presided over by the tent leader. There was an expectant hush. Then Jerry Walker stepped out and, standing in front of the great stone fireplace, told the story of Sir Galahad, the boy knight of the pure heart and the one great purpose, to whom, among all the knights of the round table, it was given

to follow the vision of the Holy Grail to a glorious end.

Though Jerry told the story simply and briefly one could almost imagine that he had seen it with his own eyes; not only that, but he made the boys see it—and right there with the glorious sunshine all about, and the breeze stirring softly through the great open air dining hall, on that first morning of camp, many a boy caught a vision, and it was a vision of purity and strength.

Then they stood and with one voice sang

“Be present at our table, Lord.”

The genial face of Alexander, the cook, who had been with the camp from its humblest beginning, beamed upon them from the kitchen door. Alexander was a chum and a friend to every boy in camp.

On one never to be forgotten occasion, a gilded youth with an eye to midnight suppers and other favors, offered him a tip.

Now Alexander was slow of speech and of a stammering tongue. Anyway, he decided that words were not adequate to the occasion, and the next thing the gilded youth knew he was lying on his back at the foot of the steps outside the kitchen door, blinking up at the sky, and wondering what was the matter with him.

This so accorded with the spirit of the place that ever after Alexander was taken into all the good times, quite as a matter of course. His rendering of

"Mona" on special celebrations and amateur nights was a star attraction and was sure to bring down the house.

Even the two new waiters smiled happily as they hurried back and forth with steaming pots of coffee, and smoking dishes of cereal, and bacon and eggs. No one knew their names, and no one asked. It was not necessary. They were promptly given new ones. One slipshod individual, with a decided cast in his eye, but of undoubted good nature, was christened "Goo-goo" before he had made the rounds of the pavilion twice, and was so known to the end of camp.

The other was a giant in stature, and had the peculiarity that when he bent over, one felt that he was about to close up like a jack-knife. He was known thereafter as "Shorty."

A little silk flag floated gayly from a standard on Carewe's table, showing that it was the neatest and the most tastefully set of all in the dining hall.

This was to be awarded every mealtime, and was a much coveted distinction, as the duty of table setting was performed by the boys themselves.

From his seat at Griswold's right, Sandy was all eyes and ears for everything that was going on. Just behind him Dad Farrington's boys were discussing canoe trips, while directly in front, at the next table, the two older boys who acted as tent leaders were planning for the first amateur night performance, and Skin Lightwood was telling a boy whom he hailed as "Crullers," what he would do if he only had been allowed to bring his gun.

The Chief sat just in front of the great fireplace and at his right was a fair-haired lady with laughing blue eyes, whom the boys knew as "The Lady of the Bungalow." She was deeply intent on the care of a baby girl, whose face was a round miniature of the Chief's, and who was waving her hands, and throwing kisses right and left with charming impartiality.

When breakfast was over the Chief stood up, and in an instant his ringing tones attracted the attention of every boy there.

"I just want to give a brief outline of the work of the camp," he said. "One week we have instruction, and the next canoe trips and hikes. This morning we begin our first week of instruction. Eighteen different courses will be taken up, all tending to an all-round, well-developed manhood. The classes begin at nine with physical culture, fencing and wrestling, and end at twelve with swimming, life-saving, and sailing. You will not be able to take them all at once, but I want every fellow to be busy all morning at something. There are a few things which you cannot afford not to know, swimming for instance. Any fellow who does not know how to swim, stand up."

Sandy's cheeks grew scarlet as he slowly rose to his feet. This was the hour of his deep humiliation. His mother had an unreasoning dread of the water and had forbidden him learning to swim until she was satisfied that he was safely guarded. How he almost wished that he had disobeyed her.

"All right, Merrill. All right, yes, anybody else?" called the Chief as a dozen or more responded.

"Now, Mr. Poole, you will get these names, and take charge of them at the swimming hours. And I want to tell you boys what a privilege you have, in being taught to swim by Mr. Poole. Did you ever hear of the human fish? Well, this is it. He has taught one hundred and fifty boys to swim, in the swimming tanks down at the club. He taught our leaders life saving before coming to camp, and has a class for men every morning at half past seven, and he does it all for nothing, just for the pure love of it.

"Now it's up to you to do your best when you have a chance like that. There is no reason why you should not each have a certificate for swimming to send home by the end of the week."

After this the Chief went over a list of manly accomplishments which fairly made the boys dizzy, and again and again Sandy had to acknowledge with shame that he knew nothing about them.

Things looked pretty dark just then, until Hugh Griswold said so quietly that no one else heard:

"It is not what you know now that will count, but what you have learned by the time camp is over."

"Oh, but I feel like a regular mut. I'm the biggest greenhorn in the whole bunch!" cried Sandy, as he sat down, covered with confusion.

"I don't believe you'll have that to say a week from to-day."

Sandy looked up into the wonderfully earnest face of the young man, with hope in his heart. He had not forgotten that yesterday, in the time of fierce and sudden need, the world of manhood had opened

up to him. He knew now that it could never quite close again.

“I’ll do my best,” he said simply, and squared his shoulders, as he went out to the class in physical culture.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE TRAIL OF THE INDIAN

SANDY and Barney had as companions in their tent, the boys they knew best, Jim Phillips, Billy Browne and Fat Wolcott. There was space for two or three others, but they had not come yet. The tent itself was twelve feet square, with a good floor, and double tiered bunks on each side. Immediately back of it was the woods, with glimpses of the lake shining through it.

On the afternoon of the second day in camp, Sandy sat at the back door of the tent deeply immersed in a brown paper-covered book, which seemed to require much careful study and thought. It was thus that Barney found him, much to his disgust.

"What you got there?" he demanded impatiently. "I didn't come to camp to sit with my nose stuck in a book, you bet."

Sandy looked up abstractedly "Do you know that there's a right and a wrong way of flying the Union Jack?" he asked irrelevantly.

"No, what's that got to do with it?"

"This is the scout book."

"Well?"

"I asked the Chief this afternoon if I might join the scouts."

"What did he say?"

"Well—I guess he thinks I'm not fit—even to be a tenderfoot."

"Huh; I thought any fool could be that."

"Not in the boy scouts he couldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because, before you can be sworn in as a tenderfoot you've got to know the scout signs and salute; all about the Union Jack and the way to fly it, besides learning how to tie four different kinds of knots."

"Then what do you do?" asked Barney with more interest.

"You take the oath and serve a month as a tenderfoot, then if you learn a lot more things, you can be a second-class scout. The Chief says if I swing in on things here at camp, I can get 'em all beat a mile."

"You didn't swallow all that, did you?"

Sandy turned to his book with an offended air, and Barney hastened to make amends.

"What is that scout law you were talking about?" he asked.

"I was just trying to learn it, when you came butting in."

"What does it say?"

"Well, it tells you to be on your honor, to be courteous, and to help other people. A scout promises to do a good turn every day. The Chief says that is the same as the Camp Couchiching spirit of 'help the other fellow.' We're supposed to practise that here anyway."

"Gee, I wouldn't care if they weren't so blamed ready to help themselves. Could you beat it, the way that puddin' got out of sight at noon?"

"Oh well, you always were an awful pig, you know, I never saw you get enough yet."

"I never do when you're around. But say, you don't mean to go in for all that, do you?"

"You bet I am, I'm going in for everything I can, and if I don't send a whole bunch of certificates home to my Dad, I'll know the reason why."

"Hear; hear; that's the talk!" cried a cheery voice, coming around the tent, and Jerry Walker and Hugh Griswold appeared.

"Somebody is getting down to business, evidently," remarked Jerry with a broad grin.

"Yes, and I see my finish," sighed Barney discontentedly.

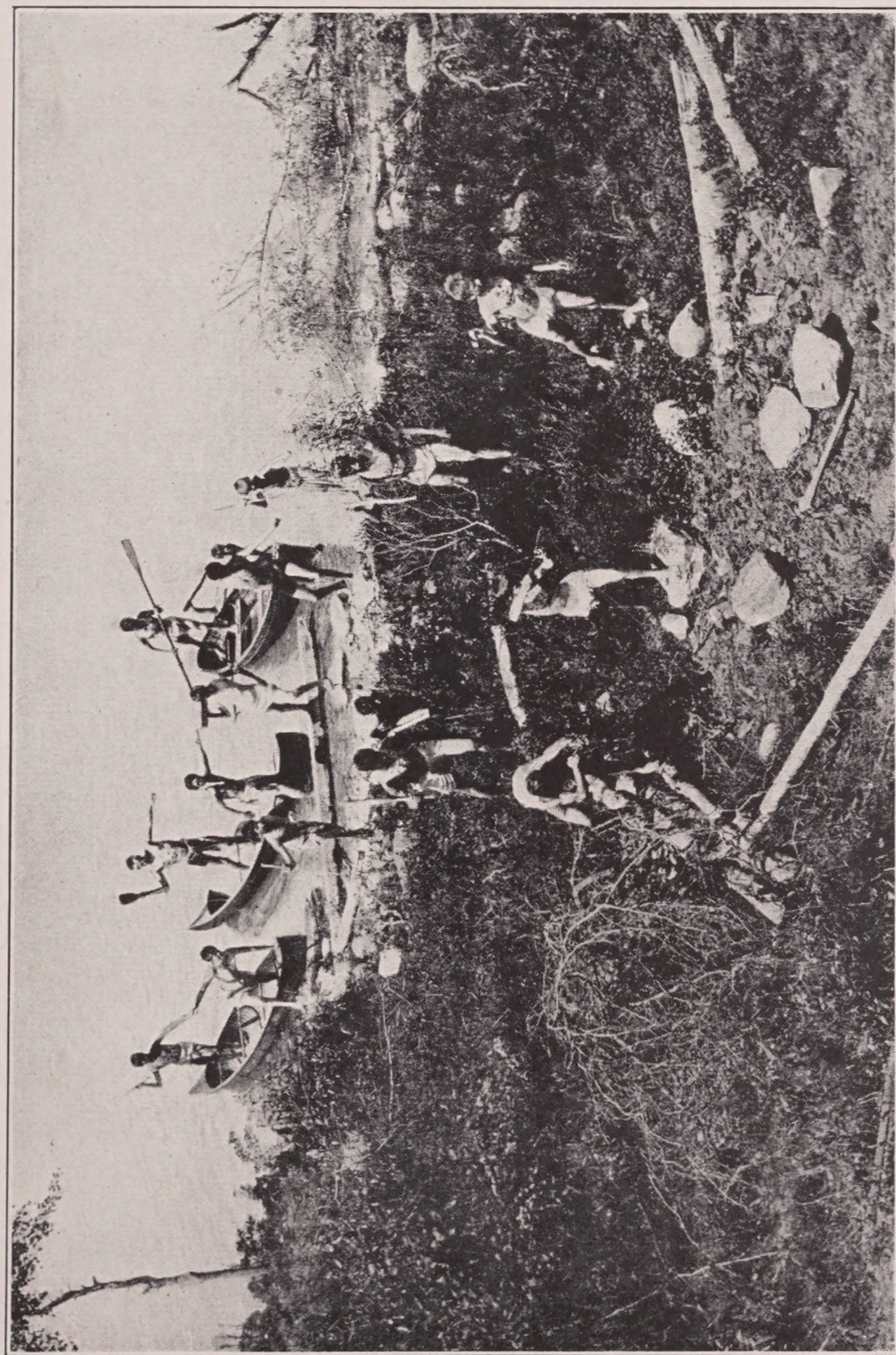
"Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing the matter with me. It's that guy over there. He's always getting a bug of some kind. He's the craziest loon you ever saw. Now he wants to be a scout, and I suppose I'll have to be one too."

The young men laughed.

"Is that all?" said Griswold. "It's a great thing to be a real scout. There are some make believes that don't amount to anything, except to look pretty in a uniform, but a true scout is always a brave man and a gentleman."

"I don't see how a fellow can be a real scout nowadays, when there are no Indians to fight, and no woods big enough to get lost in," said Sandy.



THE STORMING PARTY

"Be prepared; that is the scout's motto you know," returned Griswold. "Live up to that. Then if something really big turns up, you'll be ready for it."

"I suppose so, but it isn't very exciting. Now if a fellow only had Daniel Boone's chance," cried Sandy, his eyes sparkling with the thought.

"That's what I say," agreed Jerry Walker. "The trouble is that we are here just about three hundred years too late. You didn't know, I suppose, that we are on classic ground, so far as Indian history is concerned."

"No, tell us about it."

"Yes, this is the frontier of the old Hurons. Down at the Narrows about a mile from here, between Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching, was their famous fishing place; some of the old stakes can be seen yet under the water. Orillia, which is a mile or so the other way, is built on the site of an ancient Indian town. The old trail is just on the other side of the camp, and there is one along the water's edge, not far from the tent here."

Several of the other boys had gathered around while Jerry was talking, and they were eager to hear more. They knew Jerry to be an enthusiast in Indian lore, for he had conducted several very successful Indian pageants at camp, wherein warriors and black-robed priests had figured picturesquely.

"Were there any big fights here?" asked Sandy in awestruck tones, as he glanced around the peaceful camp.

"Not that we know of," replied Jerry, seating himself comfortably on the ground while the others followed his example. "But I can tell you one thing that really happened here. Griswold and I looked it up in the old records the other day, so we know. If you had been here the first day of September nearly three hundred years ago, and had looked out across the athletic field there, you would have seen one of the greatest scouts who ever lived come swinging down the trail with a couple of other white men, and followed by a crowd of Hurons in full war-paint and feathers. They were going down to the Narrows, to lay in a supply of fish, before starting out on the war-path to exterminate their enemies, the Iroquois."

"Who was the scout?" asked Fat Wolcott practically.

"The great Champlain. He had consented to become the ally of the Hurons in their struggle against the Iroquois, and had come up from Quebec for that purpose. The Hurons had an almost superstitious faith in him, and as they went through here that day, they were as hilarious as if they had been going on a picnic. They had seen Champlain do some deadly work with his arquebus, and they felt sure that their enemies would fall before it like trees in the path of a hurricane."

"What in the mischief is an arquebus?" demanded Barney.

"An old fashioned hand-gun, which was about as deadly at one end as the other. They stayed around

the Narrows for ten days, waiting for a reinforcement of five hundred warriors that had been promised them."

"How did they do their fishing?" asked Jim Phillips.

"In this way. The Narrows was fenced across with upright stakes driven in under water. Several small openings were left, where they placed their nets. They caught great quantities of herring that way. The wild rice grew there, too, and was gathered by men in canoes. Each man had two long sticks and as they pushed their canoes right through the rice, they bent the heads over with the sticks on each side, and shook the grain into the bottom of the canoe."

"But what about Champlain?" interrupted Sandy eagerly.

"Oh, he waited for the other warriors, as long as he could, and then when they did not come, he sent one of his Frenchmen and some Hurons to bring them along; and started off with his war-party by canoe. They paddled through Lake Simcoe, and then by portage, lake and river, they made their way to Lake Ontario, and paddling straight across it, came right into the Iroquois country.

"Talk about your Indian scouts! Well, say, those Hurons acted like a pack of fools. Danger and death lurked behind every bush, and every tree, but they shrieked and chattered through the woods like children let loose from school. Champlain was going to do it all, they thought. He could not do a thing with them. You can imagine how he felt in the

very heart of the Iroquois country, at the head of a mad rabble like that.

"Of course they got licked, and blamed it all on to Champlain. He had a hard time of it getting back here, but he spent all that winter in this vicinity."

Jerry paused, but no one stirred. Then Griswold added: "Champlain has written all about it in his 'Voyages.' Jerry and I found one thing he wrote about his ten days' stay at the Narrows which may interest you. It was about the Huron method of hunting, and was undoubtedly tried on this very point.

"He said that about five hundred Indians would form in line, from shore to shore across a point, with bows and arrows in hand, and with a great noise, and shouting, would advance to the very end of the point, and the wild animals would be killed by the bows and arrows, or forced into the water where other hunters in canoes were waiting to kill them."

"Huh! that was easy," commented Barney. "Dandy game laws they must have had in those days."

"Where's that Indian trail?" demanded Sandy.

"There's one about six feet from the water's edge," answered Jerry Walker.

"Well, I am going to find it. This whole woods looks different to me now," remarked Sandy, jumping to his feet.

"All right, come on. We have to cut flag-poles this afternoon, anyway," agreed Hugh Griswold,

leading the way. "Who will be the first to find the trail?" he challenged.

The boys followed him eagerly. Skin Lightwood and an undersized boy of sixteen, named Baggs, from the next tent, joined them, and in a few moments everybody was looking for the trail.

About fifty feet from the shore, a road had been cut through the woods to the Chief's bungalow.

It was a rough affair, with hollows and hillocks, where stumps had been pulled out, and between that and the water was a tangle of thick undergrowth. Dead leaves and pine needles made a thick carpet on the ground, and nowhere was there any indication of a trail.

The boys pushed their way eagerly through the tangle, in search of some sign of where it had been.

Fat Wolcott was the first to give up. "Nobody need tell me there ever was a trail here," he announced positively. "The only way to find a trail in the woods is to look for blazes in the trees. I don't see any blazes, so I know there's no trail."

"Oh, go on, Fat. You're looking for the blazes Champlain made with his arquebus," jeered Billy Brown.

"May be you think you're funny, but if you can find a trail, I can't," retorted Fat.

"Hello; I've got it," shouted Sandy, who had not joined in the talk, but had been pushing on over fallen trees and through underbrush, when suddenly, through his light running-shoes, he became conscious of slightly harder ground. He tested it thoroughly,

and followed it for some distance before he shouted. Then it was easy to follow, and they knew it was the hard beaten trail of many centuries which was under their feet.

"Whoop! It's me that's got it," called Skin Lightwood, emerging from a hollow just off the road, where he had been doing some exploring on his own account, and triumphantly waving a garter snake over his head.

"I just knew there was one around here somewhere, and say, isn't he a beauty?" he exulted.

The boys stopped to admire the squirming reptile, and little Baggs's eyes grew wide with mingled admiration and fear.

"That Skin 'e ain't afraid o' nothink, 'e ain't," he boasted tremblingly as he craned his neck to see it over Barney's shoulder.

Baggs was the product of long generations of old country slum dwellers, and had only been in Canada for a few months.

For a part of that time, he had been chore-boy in the King Edward Hotel, and there had heard of Camp Couchiching, the place where sports were turned out to order. It was the one consuming ambition of Baggs's life to be a great sport. He tried to appear as one by wearing his hat over one eye and looking tough; but there filtered through his brain the suspicion that there was something more to it, and he was here peeling vegetables for three hours every day, and imbibing Canadian ideals with more or less difficulty.

Skin Lightwood was his hero, and he shuddered with fearsome delight, as that worthy rolled the snake up into a ball and dropped it carelessly into his pocket.

Down in the woods, they heard soft voices and little peals of laughter, and they came suddenly to a small clearing, in the midst of which was a rustic affair, half tent, half cedar logs and evergreen boughs.

Seated on the floor of the veranda, where the afternoon sun, shining through the leaves, cast delicately traced shadows, was the Lady of the Bungalow, playing with little Couchie. They did not see the boys, and it was evident that a singing lesson was in progress.

"I wonder who's kissing her now," sang the Lady of the Bungalow, and Couchie chortled an energetic baby imitation, and there was more laughter, and a great deal of talk in the language, to which only babies and mothers hold the key.

Instinctively the boys stood still, as though it were sacred ground. Then Couchie saw them and waved a vociferous welcome, which was warmly seconded by her mother. It was a beautiful little spot, cut out of the forest, and might easily have been many miles from civilization. The boys were invited to inspect the interior of the roomy bungalow, with its folding camp-stove, and other conveniences, and grew enthusiastic over this ideal home in the wildwood.

While they were going through the tent, a sudden inspiration seized Skin Lightwood, and he drew the

snake out of his pocket, and coolly handed it to the Lady of the Bungalow.

She did not scream, or do any of the things he hoped for, but stepping back with her hands behind her, said with laughing severity:

"Skin Lightwood, go and let that poor creature loose at once. It is a harmless thing, and you ought not to torment it."

Skin was crestfallen. "I thought you'd faint," he commented disappointedly.

Meanwhile Couchie, from her seat on the rug, was viewing the party pleasantly, but critically. She knew all about boys, having seen a good deal of them during her one year of life. She looked inquiringly from one to the other, and then with a little gurgling invitation, she held out her arms to Barney.

The boys all laughed, and Barney blushed to the roots of his red hair, but he was used to babies, and stooping down, he gathered her into his arms quite as a matter of course. She had dark eyes like the Chief's, and little curling rings of fair hair all over her head.

She crowed contentedly in Barney's arms, and dug her fat fists into his hair in a business-like manner.

"I wonder who's kissing her now?" hummed Billy Browne teasingly.

"Gee, she's got an eye for color, anyway," cried Jim Phillips. "Come on, fellows, we've got no show here at all," he continued, and they laughingly bade good-by to the Lady of the Bungalow, and went on their way.

Farther down in the woods, the undergrowth became thicker and more tangled, and little paths were discovered and followed only to find that they led to nowhere, after the manner of forest paths.

Here, under Griswold's instruction, the boys took their first lesson in woodcraft, learning the names of many trees, and also the right way to fell a tree, though the saplings needed for flag-poles did not call for much skill in axmanship.

When they were done, and Hugh Griswold and the other boys had gone back to camp, Sandy and Barney found themselves at the end of the point with Jerry Walker. There were signs of its being an old camping spot, and the view up Lake Couchiching was magnificent. It was not yet time for the afternoon swim, and they sat down by the water's edge to watch the different camp craft, cruising and paddling about. The launch was coming in from Orillia with several visitors aboard, and the little dinghy skimmed over the water like a white butterfly on the wing.

"It's the Admiral giving a sailing lesson. Just listen to him now," remarked Jerry, as the little vessel drew nearer, and they made out the figures of the Admiral and three older boys.

The stentorian tones of the former floated to them over the water, as he roared: "Learn this, will you?"

"When both side lights you see ahead,
Port your helm and show your red!
Green to green or red to red
Perfect safety—go ahead!"

"Look out there, Thompson, don't let her jibe, you blockhead!"

"If he isn't the limit," commented Sandy, and Jerry laughed.

"Huh, he's a dandy policeman, anyhow," said Barney contemptuously, as he skimmed a pebble over the water.

"You're going to have a chance to join the great baseball league to-night," remarked Jerry by way of changing the subject.

"That's great. Does everybody join?"

"Yes, indeed. Nobody is left out. We've got some great players this year, too."

"Who?" asked Sandy, alive with interest.

"Lots of them among the leaders, but I guess Griswold is the best all around."

"He is?"

"Yes, didn't you hear about the time a month or so ago, when we were playing against West End, and Griswold was our pitcher?"

"No, I didn't. What was it?"

"Well say, where were you that you didn't hear that? Why, he just let those fellows down without a single player getting to first base, that was all."

"Gee!"

"Phew!"

"That's a fact. All the newspapers went wild over him. There never was such a feat accomplished in amateur baseball in Toronto."

"How did he do it?" asked Sandy breathlessly.

"Search me," grinned Jerry. "He's got magic

up his sleeve somewhere. You'd never guess it to look at him though."

"He's just fine!" asserted Sandy warmly.

Jerry's eyes swept the expanse of Lake Couchiching with a far-away expression, before he answered. There was a new light in their depths when he turned to the boys and said with almost a tender emphasis:

"Yes, finer than you know. He's white through and through."

"You bet!" agreed Barney forcibly, but Sandy said nothing.

"A week or two ago I met a man from the West, who knew Griswold, and he told me about his work out there," said Jerry, clasping his hands around one knee, and leaning back against a prostrate log. "You see, Hugh never talks about himself, so I didn't know."

"Tell us about him," urged Sandy impatiently, as Jerry paused to watch the progress of a couple of war-canoes, with their crews of hardy braves, entering the bay.

"I don't know that I can tell you very much. He was just everything to those rough men in the lumber and railway construction camps. They called him 'the Kid,' because he looked so young. It wasn't what he said so much as what he was, that gave him the grip on them, and lots of them would have given their lives for him, just for what he had been to them.

"One little thing the man told me will show you the sort of thing he was always doing; At a lumber camp he was visiting, a man took very sick with a

contagious disease. They were three days' ride from the nearest settlement, and the men all got so frightened that they were going to leave. Then Hugh Griswold got a horse and wagon, and put a bed in it, besides everything that would be of help in taking care of the sick man on the way, and started off with him to his wife and the doctor. It was a desperately lonely way, most of it through the woods. In the middle of the first night the man died. There was no use going back, so at daylight he went on, and it was near night again before he found a settler's cabin. He and the settlers knocked together some rough boards into a box, and put the body into it. For two nights while on the way, he slept in the woods with no company but the dead body of that stranger.

"It doesn't sound very much, does it? Hugh would laugh at you for thinking it worth mentioning. But, hello,—there's the horn for the swim. We'll have to run."

That evening just after supper, everybody was eager for the organizing of the baseball leagues. There were to be two, a senior and a junior, and the games were to be played every evening, between supper-time and dark. It took the Chief but a few minutes to have the men for the two leagues lined up on opposite sides of the pavilion, and it was found that there were just enough for six senior, and four junior teams. From his place among the juniors, Sandy looked with admiration and envy on the array of stars and champions on the other side. It was going to be awfully tame among these kids, he thought.

"Now, then," said the Chief briskly, "we will select the captains, and they in turn will choose their men. We will take the junior league first. I am going to call for volunteers, for captains for the junior teams. Who will be the first volunteer?"

For an instant there was dead silence, then Hugh Griswold said quietly, "I will be one," and was immediately followed by Jerry Walker, and two older boys.

Dismay hung its banners over the ranks of the seniors. Half the fun of baseball would be gone without Griswold and Walker. They looked anxiously at the Chief, half hoping that he might refuse the sacrifice, and someone even suggested it. But the Chief's face glowed with satisfaction, and then someone called for three cheers. Thus the baseball season was launched.

CHAPTER IX

CAMP POLITICS

THE next morning the camp was suddenly thrown into the throes of a political campaign, by Jerry Walker announcing that the nomination for the board of control would take place that evening, and the elections the next.

The outburst of applause which followed was partly caused by the prospective joy of battle, and partly a tribute to Jerry, whose genial smile (the irreverent called it a grin) was an institution at camp. Like the Cheshire cat in the famous tale, one might sometimes see the smile without Jerry, but never Jerry without the smile. The youngest boy called him Jerry, without fear of rebuke, and the oldest found in him a good comrade, who could be counted on, where a man's help meant much.

He had charge of the department of entertainment and lent to each day's programme a joyous enthusiasm, which permeated the whole camp.

Party feeling ran high, but Sandy and Barney were at sea as to the meaning of it all.

"You see it's this way," explained Jim Phillips, in reply to a question. "The board of control takes charge of all complaints and matters of discipline. The President is a leader, and the four members are

boys. There are two parties, the Kinkers and the Nationalists."

"Who's running this time?" asked Sandy.

"Bob Sparling and Adams for President. There's going to be no end of fun, for the fellows all like Adams, and he has the Nationalists and the boy scouts with him, while Bob Sparling is the hero of more than half the kids in camp. Ever notice the string he has after him wherever he goes? It's touching."

As the day wore on, it was evident that an interesting struggle was at hand.

The Admiral with all the ardor and imperiousness of his nature had espoused the cause of the Nationalists. He was not very fond of Adams, but to him it was the boy scouts against the world of sport, and he was bound that the scouts should win.

On the opposite side, Jack Whitby, and Ben Myer, the leaders in Skin Lightwood's tent, were the moving spirits. They were the journalists and the humorists of camp. Incidentally, they were the joint editors of the Kinker organ, *The Startler*, and had already stirred the Admiral to wrath by a few pointed remarks in that great journal, on the amateur detective.

The boys who were running for the board were unusually active, and Sandy was buttonholed right and left, as his politics were still in doubt.

"Say, Merrill, of course we can count on you for the Kinkers, can't we?" urged a compelling voice at his elbow as he left the dinner table.

"Don't know," replied Sandy with a shrug. He knew the boy only by sight, and was not going to commit himself.

"Oh, now, look here. You're a new boy and can't be expected to know things just as they are, but let me give you a straight tip. The Kinkers are the goods. Why, you wouldn't be counted anybody if you got hooked up with that old bunch of guff-shooters they call the Nationalists."

"Huh! that's what you say."

"That's what everybody says who is anybody."

"My, but you think a lot of yourselves."

"Well, you'll see. Now there's Windy de Forest over there. Thinks he's the whole cheese in the guff-shooters. He'll be begging and praying you to vote for him. Goes to everybody that way. Then on election he gets up looking so pious and says 'I don't ask anybody to vote for me. I want what is best for Camp Couchiching.' That's all in your eye, Peggy Martin. He wants nothing of the kind."

"Are you running for anything?"

"Sure, I'm running for the board of control, too."

"Do you think you'll get in?"

"Oh, sure I will. Say, Merrill, you'll vote for me, won't you?"

"Maybe, I'll see," temporized Sandy, as he tore himself away, only to be cornered by "Windy."

"Windy" was one of the leading sports and athletes in camp. His native kindness of heart and his readiness to do a good turn to anybody, made him a general favorite, but his loquacious and somewhat



A PILLOW FIGHT

sharp tongue, which wagged on all occasions, won for him the sobriquet of "Windy."

"Say, kid," he began with delightful familiarity, "I saw you chinning with that bum over there. Weren't you afraid he'd make you sick?"

Sandy's eyes flashed. "No, but I'm afraid you will," he retorted quickly. "I'm no kid. I'll bet I'm as old as you are."

"No, you're not. I'm fifteen."

"Well, I'll be fifteen my next birthday."

"Oh, well, that's all right. Don't get on your ear so quick. That fellow over there thinks he's it, and I just don't want you to believe him, that's all."

"Well, maybe he is."

"No, he's not, I am."

The easy boldness of this assertion staggered Sandy, and almost won his admiration.

"You see it's this way," continued Windy oracularly. "I know more about camp than any of these fellows, and I believe in a square deal for everybody. There's no end to the things I'll put through for the good of camp if I get in. You'll be a Nationalist; sure you will."

Sandy shook himself free. "I haven't a ghost of an idea yet. If you know, you're wiser than I am," he said shortly.

It was Harvey Jameison who finally decided his political principles.

"Of course, you're going to root for the Nationalists to-night," he remarked, when they met on their way to the line-up for supper.

"I don't know yet, but I was thinking of going in with the Kinkers," replied Sandy slowly.

"Oh, no; that would never do. Not if you have any idea of being a boy scout. You see, you are in duty bound to help every other scout. You wouldn't be worthy of the name if you didn't."

That settled the matter. He would not be disloyal. Therefore, he would be a Nationalist. Barney had no such scruples, and had already thrown in his fortunes with the Kinkers.

That evening when dusk was settling into night, and the red flames were curling around the great logs in the big stone fireplace, the boys gathered in from the baseball field, ready for the fray. Sharply divided as to party, they mounted chairs and tables with a goodly supply of tin pans and spoons with which to emphasize their approval or disapproval of the sentiments expressed by the speakers.

A strong breeze blew in from the lake, and the heavy canvas curtains were fastened down on that side of the pavilion. They strained at their cords, and the leaping flames cast fantastic, dancing shadows high among the rafters, and lit up the eager faces of the embryo politicians on either side.

Then Jerry Walker stepped out to declare the nominations opened.

"Fellow citizens," he said impressively. "We are here to-night on the important business of nominating candidates for President and members of the board of control, for the ensuing two weeks. I need

not remind you, that Camp Couchiching stands for clean politics and high principles. If a man has won our confidence by being clean, and decent, and true; if he has shown the Camp Couchiching spirit of 'help the other fellow,' and if he has self-control enough to control others, then he is acceptable as a candidate. We leave you to judge. The nominations are now open. I will call upon the Kinkers to nominate their first man."

There were three cheers and a tiger for Jerry, just to start things off in approved style, and then a boy by the name of Larry sprang on to the table, which served as a rostrum, and with his most engaging smile, amid cheers of encouragement from the Kinkers, and howls of derision from the Nationalists, begged leave to nominate Bob Ross, otherwise known as "Crul-lers," for the board of control.

"I'll tell you, fellows——" he said, with an attempt at taking the audience into his confidence, but in the uproar that followed from the Nationalist side, he got no further.

"I'll tell you what——" he began again, but the din increased.

Then the Kinkers took a hand, and sang until the rafters rang:

"I'm a Kinker, I'm a Kinker
I'm a Kinker till I die,"

and by sheer force of numbers, and strength of lung, drowned out their opponents. Then they stopped

suddenly, and Larry took up the thread of his remarks.

"Now I want to tell you, just what sort of a fellow Crullers is. I've lived in the tent with him, and I know him——"

(A voice, "Oh, we're well acquainted with him.")

"He's the most generous fellow in this camp. (Windy, "say, Crullers, lend us a nickel.") He's the champion boy swimmer of Canada. Whenever he attends a meet, he cleans up every event he enters. He has so many medals strung around his belt that you can't count them. What more can you say for a fellow than that? Vote for Crullers, fellows, and you'll make no mistake."

Larry jumped down amid cheers, groans and the beating of tin pans. Then a Kinker hopped on a chair and demanded:

"What's the matter with Crullers?" and the answer was heard in Orillia.

"He's all right.

He's a lulu, He's a Cuckoo,

And he gets there every time.

We all rejoice, with heart and voice

To see him get there.

Who?

Crullers.

Who says so?

Everybody.

Who's everybody?

The Kinkers,"

ending up with three cheers for Crullers.

The tall boy, who rose to second the nomination, was the one who in the train on the way up to camp had been threatened with a ducking for his one and only joke. He stood undisturbed through all the din of the Nationalists.

"Phew!" he exclaimed, holding his hand in front of his face. "I thought I felt a draught. It's Windy's breath. I take much pleasure in seconding this nomination. He's a Kinker. (A voice, "Poor fellow"), and as such ought to have our support. There he is. Look the animal over for yourselves. There's nothing like him anywhere."

At this juncture Windy de Forrest sprang to his feet and improvised as he sang:

"Under the spreading maple tree
The knock-kneed Kinker stands;
A weak and puny child is he,
With small and dirty hands,
And the muscles on his skinny arms
Are strong as rubber bands."

This brought down the house, even the Kinkers being unable to withhold applause altogether.

Then the chairman announced that the Nationalists now had the opportunity of nominating a man.

This was a signal for the applause and vituperation to swing around to different sides. It was evident that the Kinkers were the stronger, both in numbers and in enthusiasm. For fully five minutes they made it impossible for a Nationalist to utter a word.

Then the Admiral grew angry, and shouting, "This is all dashed nonsense!" clambered up to a chair on a table that he might the better direct the Nationalist side of the campaign. To him this was no joke and he glowered blackly at Whitby and Myer who were high on the wave of fun and frolic, and lost to everything but the fervor of the occasion. The echoes awoke as they led their faction in party slogans, and uncomplimentary descriptions of their enemies. Whitby being a poet, wore his hair long to distinguish him from ordinary mortals, and now in his excitement it was standing out at all angles, and his face fairly glowed and sparkled with good-natured fun.

Harvey Jameison had mounted the rostrum, and he made several vain attempts to be heard.

"Aw, give Tim a chance, can't you?" cried a lover of fair play at last.

"Now, gentlemen, this is no joke," protested Harvey, when he could be heard.

"No, but you are," interjected Whitby, and the din started again.

"Tim" was too seasoned a campaigner to be disturbed by interruptions and he went coolly on:

"I take great pleasure in nominating Allen de Forrest for the board of control. There is no doubt he is the best man in camp." (A voice, "Ugh! We know Windy, he's near bughouse.") "He's the best all-round athlete, and the best for the Camp Couching spirit. I never saw him sore——"

"Time's up," called someone.

"You shut up," yelled the Admiral, jumping to his feet. He had been perched on a chair on top of a table, and now shook his fist at the Kinker ranks. Someone started:

"There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night,"

and the Kinkers sang till they were hoarse. The Admiral trying vainly to be heard grew disgusted, and threw himself back on his chair exclaiming:

"By Jove, this is dashed——" when the chair toppled, and turning a complete somersault, he landed sputtering and choking among the boys on the floor. This contribution to the gayety of nations, demoralized proceedings for the next fifteen minutes, both friends and opponents joining in the general hilarity. Then the program was resumed with fewer interruptions, and ended up with the nomination of Adams and Sparling as Presidential candidates.

The next day, there was an undercurrent of expectancy through all the day's proceedings. Electioneering was carried on around the tents, and wherever the boys met. The Admiral worked with frantic zeal, assisted by a large youth named Thompson, who was his faithful henchman.

At noon, the camp papers were read when dinner was over, and Myer presented an article in the *Startler* entitled, "When the elephant gets frisky," being a humorous description of the accident

of the night before, which was highly appreciated by all but the hero of the tale.

In the Nationalist organ, Windy de Forrest got back at the Kinkers with a few conundrums. One which called forth applause from the ranks of the Nationalists was:

“Why is Camp Couchiching like a new lasso?”

“Because the fewer kinks there are in it, the better it is.”

At night they gathered once more around the blazing campfire, this time to listen to speeches from the candidates themselves. These were the last shots fired in the campaign, and it was touching to learn how truly unselfish and public-spirited the candidates all were.

“If I get in, I’ll give every fellow a fair show.”

“My platform is small, ‘Best for Camp Couchiching and its members.’”

“Our National policy, ‘Best for the other fellow.’”

With these lofty sentiments, expressed by each candidate, it was good to know that the welfare of Camp Couchiching was safe for the next two weeks at least, no matter which side was victorious.

The polling booth was in the office, and the casting of ballots by the long line of voters began.

CHAPTER X

THE ADMIRAL'S REVENGE

IT was the Camp Couchiching way to cheer the winner whether he was friend or foe, and then to forget past rivalries in working for the common good.

Thus when the whole Kinker ticket was elected, congratulations poured in upon Bob Sparling and his associates without regard to party politics, and a lot of tired and happy youngsters trooped off to bed, vowing that they had had enough fun to make it worth while.

Only one did not offer congratulations. The Admiral deeply resented the defeat, and in the midst of the cheering and confusion he walked moodily away down to the darkness of his tent. He had taken it all as he did himself, very seriously, and he had been so sure of victory. His side would have won he was sure, had it not been for those two young scamps, Whitby and Myer. How he smarted when he thought of their witty sarcasms in the camp paper, and of the laugh they had created at his expense. If he could only do something to pay them up for it all!

These were the thoughts which took possession of his brain as he threw himself on his bed, and turned his face away from the chattering of his companions.

Far into the night, even through his dreams, there floated visions of sweet revenge, and in the morning his ruby countenance placid once more, he called his chosen follower Thompson to a council of war.

Just at that time Sandy and Barney, whose morning it was to prepare for tent inspection, were edified by the sound of voices from the tent next door.

"Baggs, make my bed!"

"Here, you Baggs, clean my boots, I'm going to Orillia to-day."

"Come on, you flunky of the King Edward Hotel, don't be all day at that job."

"Baggs, get a move on."

"Oh you, Baggs!"

Sandy paused in his work of stuffing boots, boxing gloves, books, etc., where they would be least visible.

"Well I'll be jiggered!" he exclaimed slowly.

"What have they got in there, a valet?"

"Sounds like it," said Barney enviously. "Say, I can't get these beds to look straight. I wish there was no such thing as tent inspection."

Before they had finished, they saw Jack Whitby and Ben Myer starting off on a run for the pavilion and shouting a dozen directions back to Baggs.

When they were fairly out of sight, the latter came and threw himself down with a sigh, at the door of Griswold's tent, his watery blue eyes looking hungrily about. Somehow, Baggs always looked pinched and ill-fed.

"Say, Baggs, are you the hired man in there?" asked Sandy curiously.

"No," Baggs shook his head.

"Sounds mighty like it. Why don't you make them wait on themselves?"

"Well it's this w'y. Them there two young gents is teachin' me a few things as I ought to know, seein' as 'ow I'm goin' to be a sport, don't you know."

"They are, eh?"

"Yes, they says as 'ow they'll learn me table manners. That's wot they calls it. I never knew nothink about it. When I sits down to the table and I has a harm and a fork to reach with, and some grub, then I don't ask for nothink more, but they says to me, 'Baggs, you got to 'ave it or you can't be no sport,' and I says to them 'You learn me all you can, and I'll do work for you to pay for it,' I says."

"Do you really think you're going to be a sport?"

Baggs's stunted form straightened suddenly, and his white face grew light with the passion of a great desire. Jumping to his feet, he threw back his shoulders and thrusting his hands into his pockets, strutted back and forth in front of the tent.

"Yes, sir! A rare sport, that's wot I'll be. The Chief 'e says, 'elp the other fellow,' but I'll be blowed if I'm goin' to 'elp any bloke as I don't 'ave to. Wot I wants is to *lick* the other fellow. Say, did you ever dream that there wasn't anybody in the whole world as dared pass the time o' day with you? I 'ave, and if they does I just shakes my fist under their noses and makes them eat their words."

"Great Scott, Baggs, don't scare a fellow that way," cried Barney in mock terror.

"What I can't make out is why you let those fellows put it over you the way they do," remarked Sandy, trying to reconcile the dream with the reality.

Baggs sat down with a hopeless gesture.

"Young gents must 'ave their bit o' fun," he said weakly.

"Oh, piffle! Don't you let them have it on you, that's all. But, hello! there's the call to physical culture," cried Sandy, setting off on a run for the athletic field.

After dinner, he sat in his tent committing to memory some lines for a part he had in a play that night.

It was the first amateur performance of the season, and the first time Sandy had ever taken part in anything of the kind, so it was a highly important occasion. The other boys were gathered under the shade of the great maple near the pavilion, listening to a visitor tell a story. This was what the Chief called the after dinner rest-cure.

Everything around the tents was still, and Sandy, was making the best use of his opportunity, when an angry exclamation, a scuffle, and the sound of men's voices in the next tent attracted his attention. For a few moments he stuck to his work, then he heard Jack Whitby's voice shrill and choking with anger, and he rushed out in time to see the Admiral and Thompson running away. In the tent he found

Whitby a sight to make his friends weep. His long hair had been cut out in streaks and gouges, and his face was white with anger.

He, too, had been preparing for amateur night, much of the success of which depended upon him. In his capacity of playwright, actor, grand opera star and stage hand combined, he had taught them to expect much, and this new play was to surpass anything that had yet appeared at camp.

He had smiled softly to himself as he contemplated the part of the heavy villain in the melodrama, "Lizzie, the Beautiful Fishmonger," and realized that nothing quite so dramatic had ever before flowed from his pen. Out of doors everything was still, and there was no sound save the whispering of the breeze in the tree-tops and the lapping of the water on the stones. He did not notice the sharp breaking of a twig close to the tent, and he was totally unprepared when a rough hand was thrust down the neck of his flannel shirt, and he was jerked violently to the ground. He gave one angry exclamation and struggled with his assailants, but in vain, and as he lay back panting and helpless, he looked up into the triumphant face of the Admiral.

"Sit on him, Thompson," cried that worthy excitedly and Thompson obeyed. As he was a much heavier man than Whitby, the result bade fair to be utter extinction. It was the undisguised malice in the Admiral's face, as well as Thompson's crushing weight, which made Whitby long for his friends at that moment. There was something different here

from the ordinary pranks played by the campers on one another.

"Now, then, my dear journalist," said the Admiral with an exaggerated bow, "you of the fluent pen and the ready wit, I'm going to do the Delilah act, don't you know. You won't be so wise to-morrow, by Jove!"

Stooping over the half-smothered victim, and taking a pair of shears from his pocket, he proceeded to cut irregular swaths from his long hair. It was an awful moment for Whitby, as he felt his treasured locks coming off in square blocks and in bunches here and there, wherever the reckless shears turned.

"There!" cried his tormentor in highly satisfied tones, as he stood erect and viewed his handiwork.

"My word! but I've improved your looks I do declare. Your own mother wouldn't know her darling boy now. Well, ta, ta!"

They hurried off and Whitby sprang to his feet, hurling angry epithets after them. When Sandy entered, he poured out an incoherent story of the attack, his face white and his eyes blazing. One glance in the mirror almost made him faint, and he hastily donned a broad-rimmed felt outing hat, while Sandy removed all traces of the shearing from the floor. He was full of honest indignation at the outrage, and was glad when Ben Myer came strolling in alone.

A word and a look explained the situation to him and he was as overcome with rage as his chum.

"Let's get out of here!" cried Whitby. "I'm not

accountable for what I do, and I simply can't face the fellows now."

"But what about the play?" objected Myer.

"I don't care anything about it. I shall have nothing to do with it. Only let us get away."

"Won't you come to-night?"

"No, I tell you. Hurry out of here. I can't stand it another minute."

"All right," agreed Myer, as he gathered up the manuscript of "Lizzie, the Beautiful Fishmonger," with a sigh. "Here, Merrill, take this to Jerry Walker and tell him to work it up himself. Maybe I'll telephone to him, but don't you tell a soul of what has happened here. We'll tell them ourselves—and, oh, yes, you may tell Bob Sparling that we took his canoe. It's right out here. Come on, Jack."

Sandy watched them as they paddled out of sight around the point between the camp and Orillia, and then turned to give his message to Jerry Walker and Sparling.

Whitby and Myer did not return, and their absence was the cause of much complaint during the amateur performance. Notwithstanding the fact that Jerry put all the ingenuity of which he was capable into it, the play was a distinct disappointment. Without the moving spirits it fell flat.

The tall and willowy heroine (Skin Lightwood) was far from being irresistible, and the hero's devotion was lukewarm. The villain was not convincing, and more than once the "hook" was called for.

"It's rotten?"

"Where's Jack Whitby?"

"Where's Myer?"

"Say, they're a pair of quitters to go off this way. What do they think we are?"

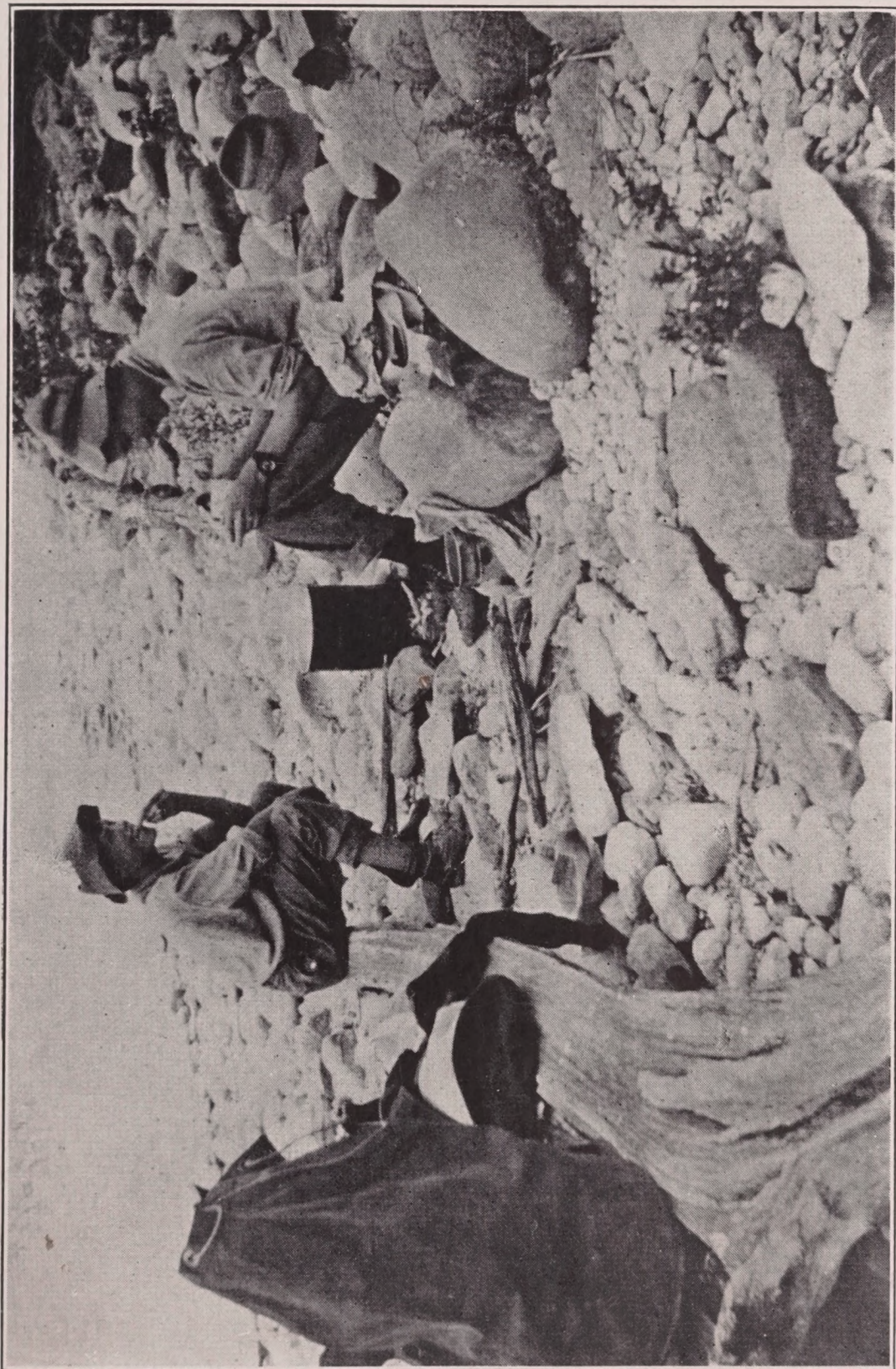
These and similar remarks, Sandy heard all around him as he came out after his light part in the performance. The Admiral sat with a little smile playing over his face, and Sandy wished that he was big enough to choke him. Hugh Griswold was perched on the railing which ran waist high all around the pavilion, and Sandy joined him there. It was good to creep as close to him as possible in the semi-darkness, and when Griswold threw a friendly arm around his shoulder and drew him closer, there was not much left to wish for. The friendship between the two was growing with the days, and it was good for the boy.

Together they watched the different stunts of the performers, and joined in the applause, or in the calls for the "hook," according to the merits of the players.

"I guess this is the last—good thing, too, for it sure was a bum show," commented a boy, as two acrobats displayed their qualities in tumbling.

When they had retired with half-hearted approbation from the audience, many of the boys prepared to leave, when Jerry Walker stepped forward to make another announcement.

Some of the boys sighed. "Is there more of it?" they asked wearily, and settled back in their seats again.



THE MID-DAY HALT

"As a closing number," announced Jerry, "we will have an original song from Mr. Jack Whitby."

The ripple of applause arose to a roar, and then to shouts of laughter as that young man stepped in front of the curtain. It was not the Jack Whitby they knew, but a close-cropped individual, with streaks of bare scalp showing at irregular intervals over his head. Sandy stared at him, fascinated. There was not a trace of the anger and perturbation of the afternoon, but his face was serious and dreamy, and the shouts and applause of the audience did not call forth even an answering smile.

From the piano back of the curtain there came forth the prelude to one of the most touching and inspiring songs of the time, and then Whitby threw back his head and sang with all the pathos and earnestness of which his really beautiful voice was capable:

"Last night as I lay dreaming
I dreamed a dream so fair,
I dreamed they pulled poor Whitby out
And cut off all his hair.

And Whitby lay upon the ground,
And not a friend was there.

Oh, Admiral! Oh, Thompson!

Bump, teedlyump, tump, tump.

Oh, Admiral! Oh, Thompson!

Bump, teedlyump, tump, tump."

The effect was electrical, and as he sang on through

five verses descriptive of the crime and the criminals, the audience was wrought up to a high pitch of sympathy and righteous indignation. He so carried them with him, that they saw vividly the meanness of the perpetrators and the agony of the victim, and decided that something must be done. They joined in the chorus until the rafters fairly rang with:

“Oh, Admiral! Oh, Thompson!
Bump, teedlyump, tump, tump,”

and when it was over, there were cries from all sides, “Paint them,” “Throw them into the drink.”

The camp was as one man in deciding that the guilty must be punished. It had its own standard as to conduct, and the universal verdict regarding this was that it was “dirty.”

The pavilion was lighted by two or three hanging lamps, which were quite sufficient on nights when the campfire was burning, but to-night there was no fire, and the light from the lamps was fitful, leaving much of the pavilion in gloom.

It was this circumstance which enabled the Admiral and Thompson to get away in the general confusion, leaving a baffled and disgusted lot of boys to mourn their loss. The younger ones would have started out in full cry after them in the darkness, but were restrained by wiser heads.

Dad Farrington was put in charge of proceedings, and contributions towards a general paint-pot were called for.

Alexander, the cook, gave the dregs of the chocolate pot and the camp clerk a bottle of purple ink, while Skin Lightwood gladly turned in his whole store of shoe polish. Sand, tooth paste, red ink, tan polish, and several other offerings made up a mixture which gladdened Dad's heart.

Alas! When it was all ready for action, the inexorable horn sounded and everybody groaned. There was no ignoring the summons, however, and there was a general scampering towards the tents. In a few minutes "quiet hour" was sounded and everything was still. Then "lights out," and the boys went grumbling to bed. Even while they thought about it they were asleep and did not open their eyes until the first horn sounded in the morning.

Meanwhile stealthy forms, under Dad's able generalship, were making preparations for an onslaught on the Admiral's tent. "Painting" was not altogether a lost art at camp, but there were stories handed down from the heroic age which made all recent achievements in that line seem tame and colorless. Those were the golden days, full of the joy and the lust of battle, when camp meant but a few tents pitched among the pine stumps in the midst of a hastily cleared wilderness, before the enervating luxuries of pavilions, brass horns, and gasoline launches had taken away much of the old time freedom and romance.

There were not a few of the sturdy pioneers left, however, and they were among the ringleaders in to-

night's raid. They meant to do their work thoroughly, for the honor of Camp Couchiching was at stake.

The tent was in darkness, and as the attacking party drew a cordon around it, and Dad and the dauntless "Crullers" entered like panthers ready to spring on their prey, there was no sound but the quiet breathing of the sleeping occupants of the bunks. As tent leader, the Admiral slept in a cot placed between the two rows of bunks; and it was upon this that the invaders concentrated their attention.

Dad reached out a determined hand to grab the sleeper. It closed on empty air. The cot was empty. At the same time Crullers had discovered a vacant bunk where Thompson should have been. They struck matches to thoroughly examine the tent and identify the faces of the sleepers. The offenders had once more slipped through their fingers. Outside, the reserves were impatiently kicking their heels in eager anticipation of the coming fray, and there was a rumble of disappointment when the scouts reported failure.

"Now don't you worry. They've got to come back some time and we'll get them sure," said Dad with the easy assurance of conscious strength. "We'll divide our forces. Two or three can keep guard here while the rest of us take a look around."

Until the small hours of the morning the restless search was kept up, with an intermission for a raid

on the biscuit boxes in the pantry. Then they went to bed, and a great stillness pervaded the camp.

Meanwhile the refugees, with a blanket apiece, had betaken themselves to the woods in the nick of time.

"It's the easiest thing in the world to spend a night in the woods, don't you know," whispered the Admiral, with an assurance he did not feel, as they plunged into the gloom, to escape the vigilance of their pursuers.

"I'm blamed if I want to stay here all night," snapped Thompson. "We ought never to have got into this scrape. It wasn't decent and I know it."

"Oh, that's all dashed nonsense," said the Admiral loftily, as he stumbled on in the darkness. "Served the little upstart jolly well right and I'm not a bit sorry."

They were now in the very heart of the woods, an experience entirely new to them both. There was something awful in the silence and gloom of it. Mosquitoes settled on them in swarms, and Thompson, accustomed to the light and the noise of the city, had an unaccountable spasm of fear.

"Jiminy! I'd rather go back and take my medicine than stand this," he choked, as he swatted mosquitoes right and left.

"Let us lie down here and cover our faces so they can't get at us," suggested the Admiral, and they sought a comfortable spot on the ground.

This was difficult, for there was much undergrowth and the ground was uneven. When they had finally settled themselves, they found that the pests attacked

them even through their blankets. Through the trees they had seen the distant gleam of the lake, and they jumped up and pushed their way in that direction. A light breeze was blowing in from over the water and the mosquitoes left them for a time.

They sat in gloomy silence. The feeling that they were hunted was not a pleasant one. Thompson felt that the whole camp had turned against him for a quarrel which was not his own. He was an overgrown, thoughtless boy of nineteen, who had not meant to do any harm.

There was no sound but the whispering of the leaves, the swish of the waves against the shore, and an occasional shout which told that the vigilants were still at work.

Though they would not have acknowledged it to each other, the mystery and the silence of the dark forest dismayed them.

Thompson was a city boy with no experiences in the open, and the Admiral had been but a few months in the country. At this moment there came to his mind all the blood-curdling stories he had read of the Canadian forests, and they were not comforting.

Suddenly there was another sound, illusive, indeterminate, uncertain, but one which made Thompson's heart beat faster and his face grow white in the darkness. It was as of a heavy body making its way slowly over the fallen leaves and through the underbrush.

“Bears!”

Thompson breathed the word in a whisper, but it

was enough to throw the Admiral into a panic. In the thick woods at midnight, even the bravest man may be excused for being something of a coward.

Looking wildly about, he noted that the long limbs of a tree hung over the water's edge. In a moment he was shinning up its trunk, followed by Thompson.

"Let's get out onto a limb," he suggested in a hoarse whisper, and suited the action to the word.

A long arm stretched out straight over the water, and on this they ensconced themselves like chickens roosting in a storm—and strained their ears for further sound of their unknown foe.

Again and again they heard it; then all was silence, and they grew stiff and sore in their unnatural position. They dared not come down, and it seemed to Thompson that he had been there not for hours, but for days. Then the sounds at the camp ceased, and even the breeze died down.

"Gee, I'm going to beat it. I'd rather be painted or be eaten by a bear than stand this any longer," groaned Thompson at last, and he let himself drop to the ground.

The Admiral reluctantly followed his example.

"Well, come on," he said gruffly, and once more they gathered up their blankets and moved cautiously away.

With some difficulty they found the road through the woods from the Chief's bungalow, and followed it stumblingly to camp. There, they skirted the silent tents and making a detour, reached the athletic field. There was not a sound and no one was stirring. Evi-

dently the searchers had given up and gone to bed. With a great sigh of relief, the two hunted ones rolled themselves in their blankets and lay down to sleep under the stars. In a few moments, undaunted by mosquitoes or fear of wild animals, they were sleeping the heavy sleep of exhaustion.

Ere long the stars faded, the dawn broke and the sun rose, glinting long beams of light over the sleeping forms. Then the officer of the day came out and sounded the reveille. Still they slept on, and three minutes later the entire camp was gathered there for the setting up exercises.

No pen could describe the scene which followed; the unholy glee of the camp in general, the consternation and chagrin of the victims, and the thorough and artistic way in which the punishment was executed. A can of red-lead was found at the engine house, and, clothed only in bathing trunks, they were painted in stripes like a barber's pole, with appropriate designs on their chests. Then they were harnessed with ropes and held for the Chief's inspection, and for their photographs, before being rushed off to the end of the long dock where they were uncereemoniously pitched in. Thus, the honor of Camp Couchiching was vindicated and the incident was closed. Whatever new disagreements might arise this one would never be revived again.

CHAPTER XI

THE DISPATCH RUNNERS

DINNER hour at Camp Couchiching was a glorious occasion. One could do so many things at once. With one eye on the mail bag and the other glued on the kitchen door for the first sight of the dessert, one could at the same time satisfy the demands of a healthy appetite while listening to the boyish chatter all around him.

Whitby's table was a never-ending source of interest to Sandy. Just now the unfortunate Baggs in a sudden effort to spear a slice of bread at the other end of the table with his fork, upset his tea over the white oil cloth. Whitby arose in his wrath at one end of the table and Myer at the other, and Baggs dodged from resounding whacks on both sides of his head at once.

"Aw, wot yer doin'. I couldn't 'elp it," he cried, cowering back with his hands over his ears.

"That is part of your education, my son," remarked Myer coolly. "A fork has its legitimate uses, but you haven't learned what they are yet."

"Didn't you ask us to teach you table manners?" demanded Whitby, in injured tones.

"Yes, but I didn't hask you to knock my bloomin' 'ead off," whimpered Baggs.

"That's nothing. Just think what a bloomin' sport you'll be by the time we are through with you," Myer reassured him.

"You see, Baggs, we have undertaken a heavy responsibility in your education, and we are going to carry it through, no matter what it costs," declared Whitby gravely.

Baggs looked appealingly up to Skin Lightwood, but that worthy was trying to attract "Goo Goo's" attention for the purpose of obtaining a second or third helping of meat and vegetables, and was strictly neutral.

"Well, if they're not the limit," exclaimed Sandy. "What do you suppose is the matter with that fellow, that he is such a ninny?"

"Cigarettes," replied Griswold laconically, as he ladled out generous portions of fruit pudding.

"Cigarettes," repeated Sandy, in startled tones. "Why, what——"

"Yes, I fear that is Baggs's chief trouble. He has probably smoked them since he was a child, and they have stunted him both mentally and physically."

"But he is so anxious to do big things."

"He has made poor preparation for it. His whole system is undermined, poor boy."

"Those fellows do run on him a lot."

"Yes, the temptation is pretty strong, but Baggs won't leave them. The Chief offered to put him in another tent, but he scorned the suggestion. Leave Skin Lightwood and his adored young gents! Not he."

Sandy laughed, but his face grew grave and almost dismayed, as he thought of a certain package at the bottom of his trunk. He had not touched it since coming to camp, for there had been no time. Now he realized how utterly out of place it was in these surroundings.

How had he ever thought cigarettes manly? Then and there, he decided that that package should go to the bottom of the lake, first chance he got.

He had been two weeks at camp and there was a new poise to his head and a more manly squaring of the shoulders. In the first weekly tests, he had won certificates in every class he had entered, and the world looked altogether different. He was far enough behind the best to keep him from being over elated, but he was full of hope and courage.

Moreover, that momentous day in his life had come, when he had found his hero. Hugh Griswold, with his wonderfully expressive face, his strong love-ableness and his ability to do things, had won his boyish devotion and loyalty to an unusual degree. Back of it all, though, Sandy did not analyze it, the clean personality and the lofty purpose of the man stirred within him a desire for a nobler life than he had ever dreamed of.

The Chief's ringing tones commanded the attention of every boy in the dining hall. He was announcing a dispatch running contest, for three o'clock that afternoon. Fifteen or twenty boys were to make their way to Orillia, a distance by road of less than three miles. Each boy would carry a dis-

patch, have it signed in Maxwell's grocery and return with it to the Chief—if he could.

Twenty-five others, having a twenty minutes start, would try to intercept them on the way. If a boy got back with his dispatch, he won twenty points for his tent. If one intercepted a dispatch runner by touching him, he won five points.

After the announcement the mail was distributed, three letters falling to Sandy's share. A few minutes later he was wildly waving a letter over his head and calling:

"Oh, you Barney! Come here, I've got some news for you."

Barney had stopped at the Chief's table to play with the baby, who was left sitting in her high chair, but he hurried to Sandy at the first call.

"Dad's got news of my watch, and he thinks he'll have it in a few days, isn't that great?"

"That's fine, where did he find it?"

"Doesn't say; Tom pawned it, I suppose."

Sandy's face clouded at mention of the murderer, but Barney was full of the news.

"No odds, so long as you get your hands on it again: I tell you, I'm glad," he exclaimed joyfully.

"Yes, and father says that he and mother and Alice are all coming up on parents' day. They're all tickled to death over the certificates and my weekly reports."

"Huh!"

"Well, what's the matter? You needn't talk, for you got as many as I did.

"Sure I did, but I don't get off my trolley, or get the big head as quick as you do."

"Go on, you old duffer. Who's off their trolley? Didn't I give up joining the scouts for the present on your account?"

Barney hesitated an instant and then a smile broke over his face.

"Sure you did," he admitted readily, "and it was mighty decent of you to wait till I could buy my scout uniform."

"Cut it out; you know I wasn't fishing for that. What about this afternoon though? I'm to be a dispatch runner. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to catch you before you ever get your eyes on Orillia."

"I think I see myself getting caught by a lobster like you."

"Huh! You'll see it all right, keep your eye skinned for me, that's all."

"Oh, all right, catch me if you can, and good luck to you," laughed Sandy, as he stuffed the letters into his pocket and sauntered over to the "rest cure," to listen to the story of the London Marathon, as told by Jack Carewe. It was something to hear it from the lips of one who had taken part in that famous race, and whose name had been published throughout the world as an example of dogged courage in the face of sure defeat.

When it was finished, the attacking forces of the afternoon started off to stretch the cordon, which

was to prevent the worthy scouts from entering Orillia.

To Sandy, this game appealed as nothing else had done since he came to camp.

In it there was full scope for all the wealth of imagination of which he was capable.

He started out with half a dozen others, but was soon left alone, as some found a conveyance, and others elected to go to Atherly, and go in by train, a commonplace method of reaching the desired point, which Sandy scorned.

A train, forsooth! Why, he was an Indian runner, who must by some means, worm his way through the woods to the frontier metropolis of the Hurons, which tradition says stood hundreds of years ago on the site of the present Orillia. Lurking in the woods behind trees and bushes, were the hostile Iroquois. He must outwit them. He would not choose the road or the open fields, but would keep to the woods, as became a Huron warrior.

He remembered having read somewhere that a scout's first business is to escape observation, and he proceeded to make himself as invisible as possible.

He separated from his companions on the side of camp furthest from Orillia, and having seen Fat Wolcott and Billy Browne, running to Atherly, to catch the train there, and the other fellows pile into a baker's cart on the Atherly road, he started through a field for the nearest woods.

Wriggling his way noiselessly through the long grass, all senses alert for signs of the enemy, he came

to the woods where the glinting birch and poplar showed light against the background of cedar and hemlock, and where the ground was mottled with the golden sunlight shining through the overspreading boughs. It was all silent, save for the twitter of birds, the tap, tap, of a wood-pecker, and the lazy intruding jingle of a cow-bell in the distance. Here it was easy to give full rein to his imagination; he had but to put his hand to his side to grasp tomahawk, and bow and arrow, and when he turned his head, he could feel the breeze rippling through the feathers in his war bonnet. Choosing the soft places where there was nothing to crackle underfoot and avoiding innumerable twigs, he flitted from bush to bush, and from trunk to trunk, keeping his eyes and ears awake for signs of the enemy.

He began to think that he was entirely alone in choosing the woods, when he became conscious of someone approaching.

Dropping quickly behind a huge log, which was also screened by cedar branches, he waited breathlessly. From behind this screen he was safe from observation, while viewing the rapidly approaching enemy. What he saw almost made him laugh aloud. The dread foe was Skin Lightwood, coming along at an easy lope, with little Baggs panting at his heels.

They were fellow dispatch runners, and Sandy made a move to signal to them, but decided to wait.

"I say, Skin, there hain't no need o' goin' like that," gasped Baggs as they neared Sandy's hiding place.

"Oh, come on, that ain't fast," cried Skin in a hoarse whisper, which all the woods could hear.

"Not for you, your legs is so bloomin' long, but for a hordinary fellow like me——"

"Hordinary! Oh, gosh!" Skin's emotions choked him as he tried to keep them within bounds.

"There's no use talkin', Baggs, you and me's freaks and no mistake," he snickered, when he found his breath.

Baggs looked half offended for an instant, but the thought of being classed with his hero, even as a freak, pleased him, and he beamed a happy smile on Skin.

They had paused for a moment beside Sandy's hiding place and now they moved on. A little further on, Skin's quick eye noted a little brown bird scurrying over the ground in front of them and disappearing under a clump of ferns.

"There's a nest here somewhere," he whispered, looking around among the wild flowers which grew thick under their feet.

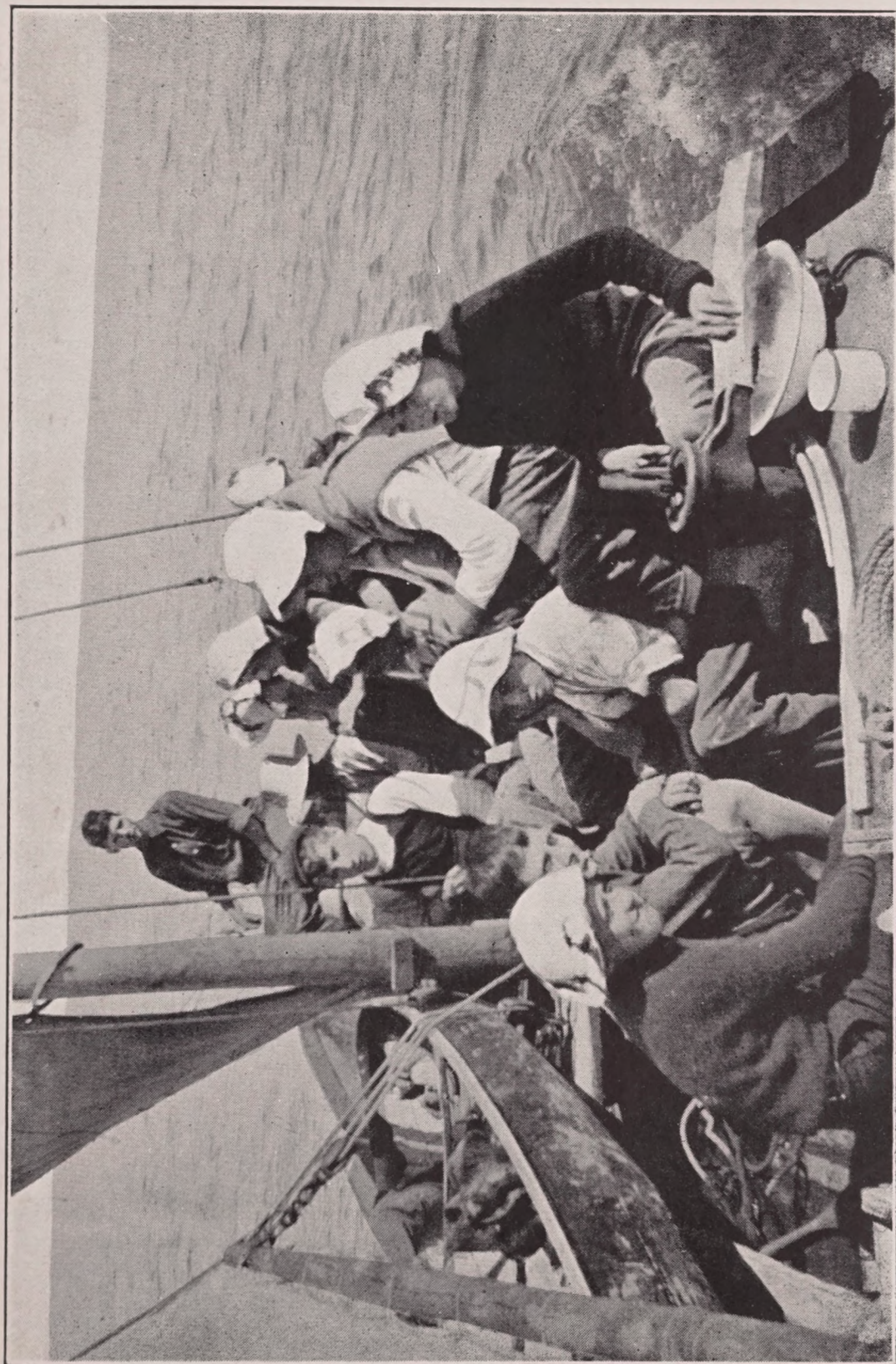
"Not on the ground?"

"Sure, and here it is. It's got three eggs in it, and they're beauties."

Baggs forgot all need of secrecy and threw himself on the ground beside Skin, exclaiming eagerly.

"You'll go 'arves, Skin, won't you? Sure, you'll go 'arves."

"'Arves, what's that?" jeered Skin contemptuously, as he held a protecting hand over the little brown nest so cunningly hidden among the leaves.



YOUNG VIKINGS

The tiny eggs were light blue with brown specks, and lay side by side like precious stones in a dark setting.

"Go 'arves on the heggs; I 'elped you find it, Skin, you know I did."

There was no one in camp more irresponsible or good natured than Skin Lightwood, but this was too much even for him. He loved all the wild things of the woods, and the thought of the little quivering brown thing among the ferns lent force to his words.

"You low-down bird catcher!" he cried indignantly, "do you think I'm going to rob a poor bird of her eggs? Get out of this."

He was towering over the protesting Baggs, when Sandy, who was an excited witness of the scene, almost cried aloud at sight of two forms springing suddenly from the woods. They had touched Lightwood and Baggs before they even knew they were there.

"You're caught!"

"It's all day with you now."

"Back to the woods, Skin, you're a bright scout, you are. We heard you chewing the rag from the other side of the woods."

"Back to camp; you're out!"

Skin looked crestfallen, and Baggs resentful, as Windy de Forrest and Harvey Jameison crowed over their easy capture.

"I'm not going back, I'm going to hunt around and catch some other guy," declared Skin and started off with his captors, Baggs still following.

Sandy lay still until they had disappeared in the

direction of the road, and then crawled out with great caution.

He had seen how easily a capture might be effected, and it made him more careful, if that were possible. He kept to the woods as far as he could, climbing over or under fallen logs, avoiding dead brush wood, and patiently making a way for himself through the interlacing boughs of the thick underbrush of spruce and balsam.

At last he came to a place where the woods ended abruptly, and he was within a few hundred yards of a neat little farm house. A lane and an orchard separated it from the road; and back of it, touching the edge of the woods at one end and stretching over many acres in the other direction, was a fragrant hay field. The hay had been cut, and the farmer and his boys were busy raking it into piles, ready for loading on to the hay rick on the morrow.

They had finished that part of the field which lay between the house and the woods, and were now at work near the snake-fence, a field's width directly back of the house. Two little children were having a merry time, covering each other up with the new hay, and at an open window a woman was singing at her work:

“God will take care of you, be not afraid,
He is your safeguard in sunshine and shade.”

From the edge of the woods Sandy viewed the scene. Beyond the hayfield was another open field,

and he decided to try the road for some distance at least.

The best way to reach the road, he judged, was to stick to the hay field as far as the other side of the house, and then strike through the orchard. The hay cocks afforded some shelter from observation, and he carefully stole from one to the other, almost on hands and knees.

The woman was still singing at her work, and through the open window there came the most delightful fragrance of raspberries, in the preserving kettle, and pastry hot from the oven. He had sudden visions of Norah, and berry pie.

Phew! Wouldn't it taste good that very minute if a fellow only had it. There was nobody like Norah, after all.

One of the children ran to the house to speak to her mother, and left the other, a toddler of two, to keep up her work of carrying the sweet smelling hay from one pile to another. None of them had seen Sandy, and he was wondering whether he had better try to conceal himself altogether, or come out into the open and risk the consequences, when he saw something which made him turn cold with horror.

Up from the other end of the field, over the flat swaths of mowed hay, at terrific speed, came a great yellow thing with open mouth and lolling tongue, the white froth flying from it, as it dashed onward in a straight line.

Directly in its pathway, laughing gleefully over the big load of hay she was carrying in her chubby

arms, stood the baby. She was calling to her mother to look, but her mother did not hear. She was filling a jar with fruit while she sang:

“God will take care of you, be not afraid.”

In a flash Sandy knew, it was a mad dog. He had heard of many of them that season. Could he reach the child in time to save it? These thoughts were in his mind as he flew over the ground, and with one sweep of his arm, lifted the baby, and darted with it towards the nearest haycock. How far away even that refuge seemed, with the thing flashing over the field like a great yellow streak. Still the mother sang on:

“God will take care of you, through all the day,
Shielding your footsteps, directing your way.”

Ah, it was impossible. He could not reach the pile of hay in time. The thing was at his very back. Then, when all was lost, and he expected it to be upon him, there was a terrific roar, and a whirlwind in the shape of another tawny body shot past him from the opposite direction. He jumped aside as the two animals came together, like raging fiends.

The mother saw and screamed, and the farmer and his sons ran from their work at the back of the field, not understanding what it was all about. The dog which had interfered so opportunely was a magnificent Scotch collie, belonging to the farm, and the

struggle which followed was a fight to the death. The mother, with a gasping sob, snatched the baby from Sandy's arms, and ran into the house, but the boys stood fascinated.

The stranger, a great yellow brute, with foaming mouth and glittering blood-shot eyes, tore and snapped with all the frenzy of madness. He ripped and slashed the collie's shoulders and neck, his teeth coming together like the jaws of a steel trap. There was no method or foresight in his attack, he was simply a furious maddened thing out to kill.

The collie, quivering and bristling with rage, circled around him in a vain effort to get at his throat. It was impossible. Sometimes he sank his fangs in the yellow dog's shoulder or side, but it was always to be ripped and torn more seriously by his snarling, snapping opponent.

The farmer who had gone into the house, came out with a gun.

Promptly raising it to his shoulder, he fired twice, and the yellow dog dropped dead.

His two boys uttered exclamations of relief, and ran towards the collie who was lying covered with blood, and whining piteously, now that the fight was over.

"Poor old Hero! Brave old dog," cried the youngest who was in tears.

"Go back!" ordered their father sternly, and they stopped short.

The dog looked up with an appeal which was almost human. Sandy thought that he had never seen

eyes which seemed to speak as did the eyes of this brave dog. The animal looked from one to the other of the group standing about, and then tried to crawl to the feet of the man, standing stern and silent with the gun lying across his arm.

The younger boy sobbed in a frightened way, and the woman came out swiftly, and with a quick glance took in the meaning of it all. She started forward with an exclamation.

"Oh, John, not Hero! You wouldn't shoot Hero!"

The man silently motioned to her to return to the house, and she became deathly pale.

"Is there no other way?" she asked pleadingly, her voice trembling with emotion.

"There is no other," he said, and she turned quickly away.

Sandy stood rooted to the spot. In all his life he would never forget that moment. The smell of new-mown hay would always bring it back.

The noble animal to whom he owed his life, lying there so sorely wounded, and vainly pleading for the help and sympathy which he had always known.

The grief-stricken faces of the two boys, and the stern, set face of the tall man with the gun lying across his arm. Even as he looked, the man raised the gun to his shoulder, and the dog looked up with a whine of expectancy; there was a sharp report and it was all over; his aim had been mercifully true.

The man lowered the gun with a groan. "Now,

may God forgive me for this deed," he cried in anguish.

Sandy turned away with quivering lip and tear-dimmed eyes. It had all happened so quickly, that he was dazed.

He had come out for an afternoon's fun, and had been suddenly thrown into the midst of tragedy. Without a word, he disappeared around the corner of the house and took up his journey to Orillia.

CHAPTER XII

THE WINNER

SO much of the zest had gone out of the game of dispatch running, that Sandy listlessly wandered through the orchard without any attempt to hide himself. A lump rose in his throat and the tears to his eyes, when he thought of Hero, and the reward that had been his. It could not be helped he supposed, but surely they might have waited. He pushed his way through a hole in the fence and sat down on the edge of the road behind a clump of cedars. There was little fear of his being captured there as the hue and cry among the scouts had advanced nearer to Orillia. He would go on in a few moments, when the turmoil in heart and brain became more settled.

A cloud of dust just then showed that a vehicle was approaching on its way to town, and he decided to ask for a ride. When it came nearer, he saw that it was a farmer's light wagon, with one occupant, a man with frowzy beard and hair, and a straw hat, his sleeves rolled up, and his shirt open at the neck.

"What's that, bub? Whoa, Bess! You want a ride, eh! Well, I s'pose there ain't no objections," he consented rather ungraciously, as Sandy stood before him hat in hand.

He reined in his horse for a moment, while Sandy jumped in beside him, his blue eyes glinting with curiosity and half disapproval. Sandy was not greatly prepossessed by his appearance, for he was untidy, and his unkempt beard was streaked with brown, a result of his tobacco chewing habit apparently.

"You see," explained Sandy, "we're playing a game, and there are a lot of fellows along the road trying to catch me. If they see me they'll try to climb up on to the wagon, so please drive fast if any of them come along."

Mr. Brown, for that was the farmer's name, cast an uneasy glance in the direction of his passenger. "You been long in Orillia?" he asked, irrelevantly, as he flicked the mare lightly with the whip.

"Two weeks nearly, of course we're not in Orillia."

"Course not. How did you get out?"

"Out of where?"

"Oh——well, out of the place you're staying at."

"To-day, you mean? Oh, I came mostly by way of the woods, because I don't want to be caught."

Mr. Brown changed the tobacco to the other side of his mouth and looked solemn.

"Who's going to catch you?" he asked warily.

"Why, the fellows; there are twenty-five of them, and they had a twenty minutes start out of camp. They're along the road here somewhere, I'll bet a cent."

A light slowly broke over Mr. Brown's face, and

he looked Sandy squarely in the face for the first time. "Are you one of the fellows from over at the boys' camp?" he asked, with a nod of his head in the supposed direction of Camp Couchiching.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, if that don't beat the Dutch! I thought sure you was one of the idjits got out of the 'sylum, and I was just figurin' on how I could get you back without any trouble."

Sandy laughed. He had heard of the Orillia Idiot Asylum, and knew what Mr. Brown meant. "That's one on you, then," he retorted, "but couldn't we go a little faster. If any of the fellows tried they could touch me at this rate, than I'd be out of the game."

"Now, bub, don't you worry," said Mr. Brown, reaching for his whip. "If any son of a gun tries it, they'll git the weight of this here whip, and don't you forget it."

Sandy settled back half satisfied, while Bess jogged along at unhurried pace and Mr. Brown eyed him curiously.

"Got many fellas there this year?" he asked, giving his head another jerk in the direction of camp.

"About a hundred I guess."

"Jiminy; it must take a lot o' grub to keep you goin'."

"I suppose so."

"Feed you pretty well?"

"Dandy."

"You pay your board, I s'pose?"

“Sure.”

“How much?”

Sandy hesitated an instant. “My father attends to that,” he said, with some dignity.

“Your pa rich?”

Sandy’s face flushed hotly under Mr. Brown’s cross questioning. “What do you want to know for?” he demanded irritably.

Mr. Brown spat unconcernedly over the wheel. “I was just thinkin’ he must have money to burn, when he could send a big healthy fella like you up here to do nothin’ but bum around and play kid games all summer. I own a hundred acres o’ land with the finest buildin’s in the township, but my boys don’t have to go traipsin’ over the country to find something to do. They stay right at home where they belong, and I find chores enough for them to do, you bet.”

His words grew more emphatic as he proceeded, and Sandy looked at him curiously, with an under-current of thankfulness in his heart that he at least, was not one of his boys.

“Don’t they ever have any good times at all?” he asked, when the farmer paused to take breath.

“Good times! What’s that? I tell you they have a mighty sight better time than I ever had. I never had anything but hard work, and they’re no better ’n I am. They’re beginnin’ to take the bit in their teeth now, but there’ll be trouble before they’re much older, let me tell you—— Here, you rascals, git out o’ the way! Easy, Bess! Git up there, that’s a

girl. Take that you son of a gun, and that, Jeeroos-alum! I wish I had hold of you."

Sandy stood up in his excitement, for there in the middle of the road were three wildly waving figures, one of them Barney. Mr. Brown gave the mare a sharp clip with the whip and then swung it menacingly right and left.

Bess sprang forward, and the attacking party jumped out of the way.

"I'll teach you to come trying to stop me when I'm driving, you young rap-scallions," shouted Mr. Brown threateningly, while Sandy's triumphant remarks were anything but complimentary, as they flew past the discomfited trio.

"Victory number one!" he remarked exultantly, when he was beyond shouting distance.

"Mighty good thing for them they didn't come in range o' my whip," said Mr. Brown, with a regretful note in his voice. "I was just in the humor to hit something that minute.

Sandy sank back with something like a sigh. The farmer was failing to enter into the sporting spirit of the game, and his temper was somewhat ruffled.

In his overall pocket he found a fresh piece of tobacco, which he chewed energetically. "It's all the blamedest tomfoolery, I ever heard tell of," he declared emphatically. "If you fellas was set to hoein' potatoes or somethin' useful like that for your livin', you wouldn't have time to be rangin' the country like this."

Sandy ventured no reply. The unimaginative far-

mer was taking all the romance out of the game, and he contented himself for the next few minutes with letting his eyes range the road ahead, for further outposts of the enemy, his mind recurring again and again to the scene at the farm.

A little later, he was sure he saw a form skulking in the shadow of the fence, some rods further on.

"Maybe it's one of our fellows trying to get in without being seen," he remarked to Mr. Brown, as he stood up for a better view. It was a camp boy, and that he was limping painfully, was his next discovery. Then he exclaimed suddenly, "It's Jim Phillips, and he's lame. He can get in with us, can't he?"

"Not if I know it," said Mr. Brown with decision.

"But he's lame, don't you see; he must have hurt his foot somehow, and he's on our side," persisted Sandy.

"I don't care who he is; I let you in, but that doesn't say I'm goin' to be cartin' round a lot of other lazy lubbers; one's enough."

"Will you let him in if I get out?"

"Well of all the fools!" Mr. Brown spat copiously over the dash board before he could do justice to the situation.

"All right; out you get. Come on, limpy; don't be all day about it. Gitep, Bess."

Jim climbed in, protesting over taking Sandy's place, but Mr. Brown did not once glance in his direction, though he gave his whip an extra flourish, as he started off again.

Sandy sprang to cover, and remained there till he

watched the cloud of dust disappear from view along the white road.

It was not altogether the Camp Couchiching spirit of help the other fellow that had landed him there. He had had enough of Mr. Brown, and was ready to take his chances afoot once more. He knew that the nearer he drew to Orillia, the greater would be the necessity of caution. According to the Chief's plan of campaign he would be safe after reaching the railroad station; but how to get there was the question. As long as there were trees and long grass, or prostrate trunks to hide behind, it was comparatively easy, but on the outskirts of a town, it was different. However, with much care and after two or three narrow escapes, he came within sight of the station.

Here he could choose between the railroad track and the street, or he could make a detour of several blocks and come in on the other side of the station. He chose the street, as he was eager to reach the goal now that it was so near. He looked long and carefully before venturing into view, but not a scout was visible anywhere. He realized too late that he had made a mistake in not changing his camp uniform for something less distinctive.

There was no help for it at this stage of the game, however, and he sauntered forth with as careless a grace as possible, keeping eyes and ears alert for possible pursuit.

The houses were, for the most part, frame cottages, standing in their own yards, with picket fences in front. A few groups of children played here and

there, but otherwise the street was deserted. Even around the station things were silent.

He had gone but a short distance, when glancing back he saw a lithe form dart from behind a building, and start in pursuit, at the same time giving a warning whoop and immediately the street seemed to be alive with scouts. They were not all at his back unfortunately, for they were coming from all sides, and much too fast for his peace of mind. In front of him was a garden gate. For lack of a better refuge, he darted in and around to the back of the house.

There he found a revolving clothes line, hung with quilts and blankets. Underneath it was a huge clothes-basket into which two quilts fresh from the line had been hastily thrown. Sandy thought quickly. Like a flash, he jumped into the basket and pulled the quilts over him.

Not a whit too soon, however, for in a trice the pursuers were upon him.

The blankets on the line partially concealed the basket, and all they saw was a basket of clean clothes. Sandy trembled as he heard their eager steps and their baffled exclamations.

"He certainly came in here."

"Sure he did, but where on earth is he?"

"Let's look in the stable?"

"That's where he is, now we'll get him."

Fortunately for them all, the lady of the house had betaken herself to a neighbor's for the afternoon. In a moment a shout came from the stable.

"Come on, fellows, there's a hole back here, he's

got out that way. Hurry up and we'll catch him."

There was a rush and a scamper, and they were off the back way.

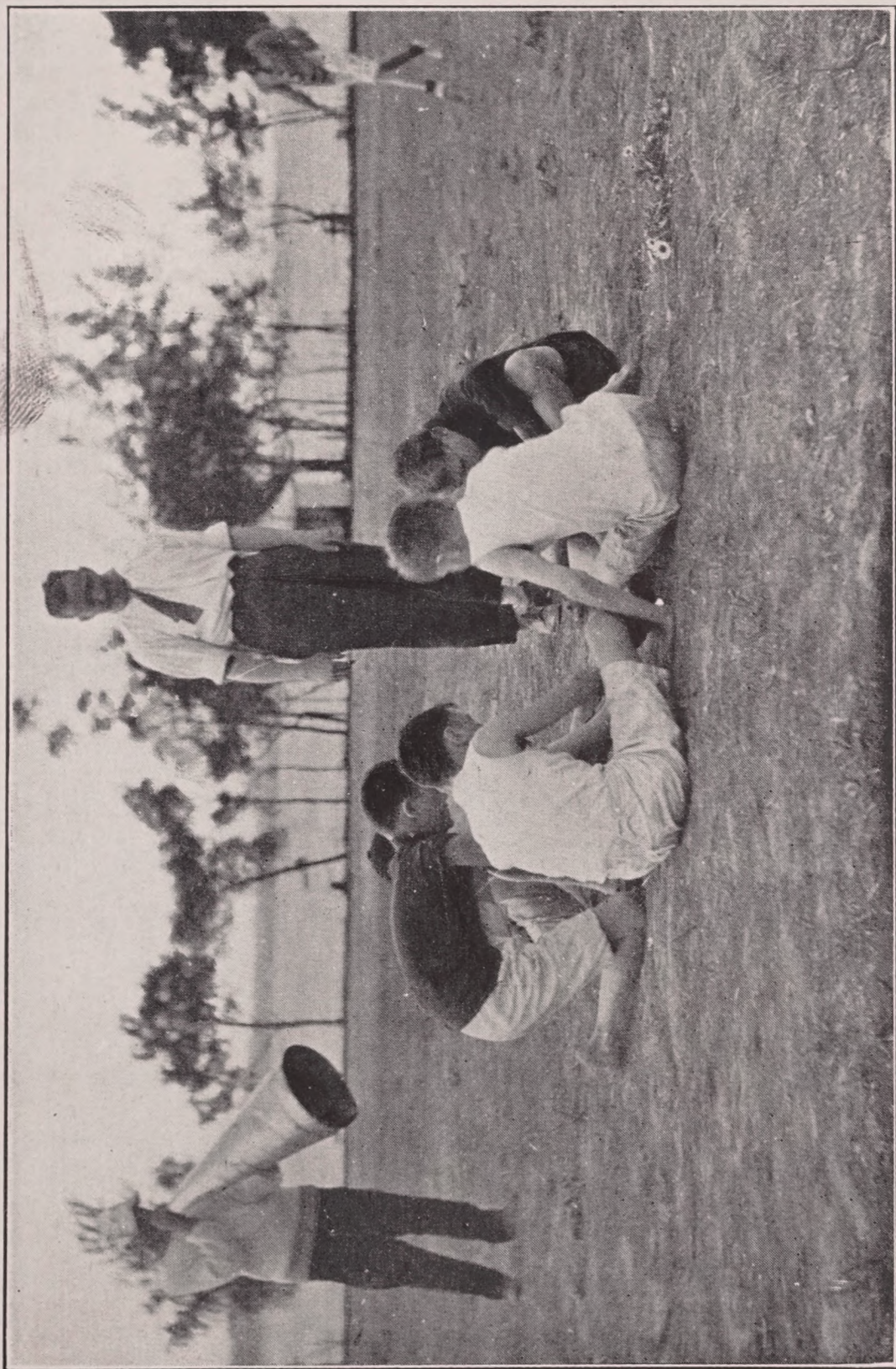
Sandy did not wait for them to tire of the chase, but with the coast clear made for the station. When the baffled scouts came back he was there, happy and triumphant, on safe territory.

It was still considerable distance up-town to Maxwell's where his dispatch was to be signed, but he had the company of his former foes and at the end, the inevitable dish of ice cream at Gibson's—— No camp boy in his right senses ever visited Orillia without stopping in at Gibson's. There they found Windy de Forrest behind the counter, loquaciously dispensing a mixture which he called 'The de Forrest Special.' The innovation took so well that everybody had to have a second or third dish, to be perfectly sure that he liked it.

After that came the perilous journey back to camp, which was full of hairbreadth escapes, and excitement enough to satisfy even Sandy. Somehow, either by watchfulness and good sense, or sheer luck, he got in with his dispatch untouched. One of four who escaped the vigilance of the attacking party.

There was not a happier boy in camp that night. He had always known he could do it, and now his first day's real scouting had been a success from first to last. Of the incident at the farm, he said nothing, not even to Barney.

The next morning at the line-up before breakfast,



IMPORTANT AFFAIRS

just as the signal was given for the flag to be raised to the top of the tall flag pole, and the long line of hungry youngsters burst forth into the strains of "Oh, Canada," Sandy noticed a man stride through the pavilion, followed by a boy, and make directly for the Chief, who was standing on the steps. It was the tall farmer, and Sandy was conscious of a vague uneasiness as he saw him speak a few earnest words to the Chief, and then scan the ranks as though in search of someone. Had he come to complain of trespass on his property, or what?

"He's a freckle-faced chap with blue eyes, my wife says, and a nose that doesn't turn up exactly but—oh, well—you know women always notice those things, I didn't pay any attention to him myself. Charlie'll know him though."

Sandy was too far away to hear the conversation, but his nose gave him a great deal of trouble about that time, and as they scanned the long line of khaki trousered, gray shirted youths, all they saw of his face was an officious bandanna handkerchief.

Jack Whitby, who was the officer of the day, gave the signal to go in to breakfast, and he lingered to the very last of the line with no other thought than that there was trouble ahead.

"That's him?" cried the boy, as he neared the foot of the steps.

Sandy looked straight at the farmer then, and saw that he had nothing to fear. The man's face was full of eager friendliness. Stepping forward, he grasped Sandy's hand in his big brawny one.

"Say, you must have thought we were a mean lot, letting you go away yesterday without even thanking you for what you did," he exclaimed, while Sandy stared at him in astonishment. What was the man talking about, anyway?

"He saved my baby's life," explained the farmer to the Chief and gave a brief account of the scene in the hay field.

The Chief was young enough to have lost none of his boy ideals. The fellow who did things loomed large in his sight, and he fairly gloried in a deed of this kind. His face glowed with appreciation, but he merely said in a casual way: "That was fine; you're not doing half bad for a tenderfoot, Merrill."

Sandy stammered and turned crimson. That side of his adventure had never occurred to him. "I didn't do anything" he said deprecatingly. "It was the dog that did it, and I'm mighty sorry you had to shoot him."

"So am I," said the farmer, "but look here; my wife wants to see you. She says to come over to supper to-night. My name's Findlay and I guess you know where to find us. Bring anybody else you like with you."

Sandy drew back; he had no desire to go and be made a hero of by the entire Findlay family.

"Oh, you've just got to come, for the Missus has been up baking for you since daylight. You'll not starve, I'll tell you that, and we won't bother you by talking about what you did if you don't want us to."

Sandy's eyes sought the Chief's before he accepted

the invitation. At the same time, there floated through his memory the grateful odor of hot preserves and berry pie.

"Certainly; go along and take Barney with you," said the Chief, and thus the matter was settled.

The worst was to come, when the Chief arose after a little and told the story to the whole camp. Every body cheered and Bob Sparling demanded, "What's the matter with Sandy Merrill!"

Never was the answer given with greater fervor and Sandy sat turning hot and cold by turns, and wanted to run away.

Barney stared at him in mingled pride and astonishment, while the Chief was speaking, but when the cheers and applause died away, he merely remarked, as he stirred his coffee. "Say, you duffer, don't you go gettin' stuck on yourself. We'll take it out of you for this, and don't you forget it."

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. MERRILL AND THE WORLD OF SPORT

PARENTS' day came and went so swiftly that before the boys realized it, it was gone. The invading host of fathers, mothers, aunts and cousins, swept over the camp like a conquering army, and the best that the camp afforded was theirs. Alexander had his choicest joints done to a turn five minutes after they arrived, and Jerry Walker was ready with his programme for the afternoon sports before the last relay of diners, smiling and satisfied, was streaming out of the pavilion.

The boys had an array of new stunts with which to astonish their doting relatives, and the games were so arranged that everybody had a chance to show off. Besides the ordinary sports indulged in at any athletic meet, there were contests peculiar to camp and boy-scout life, including knot tying, lassoing, the lighting of scout fires and the cooking of dinners. War canoe races, swimming, diving, life saving, and water polo. So swiftly did the events follow on each other's heels, that train time had come before the delighted visitors realized it.

Sandy's brain was in a whirl, in his new capacity of host to his own family. He was eager that they

should appreciate to the full, the merits of the place, and know the high standing of the men with whom he was associated. How could he work it that they would see him hobnobbing with Bob Sparling and Jack Carewe? That was the question. It would be the dizzy height of glory. And as for Hugh Griswold, it was a foregone conclusion that he and his father should be friends.

Alice found friends of her own age, and Sandy only caught glimpses of her occasionally, fluttering here and there, a pretty girlish figure, surrounded always by a group of admirers.

Mrs. Merrill went through the day as one in a dream. She had not favored the plan of sending Sandy to camp, and now while she could not deny that he was wonderfully improved, she found the air electric with the very things of which she so strongly disapproved. She felt herself an alien amidst all these sport enthusiasts, and marveled inwardly that there were mothers there who were even urging their boys on to greater feats of physical prowess. Beside her during the foot-races was a dark-eyed, red-cheeked little woman, who so far forgot her dignity during the hundred yard dash in which both her son and Sandy participated, as to jump to her feet and shout, "Go it, Jimmie! go it, Jimmie! *go it, Jimmie!*" and when the boy won, her face was radiant with delight. A few minutes later he was by her side accepting her congratulations.

"I heard you, mother, and it helped a whole lot," he said, with a happy smile.

Mrs. Merrill's lips tightened. "Well of all things!" she commented primly.

During the race she had only been conscious of an overwhelming fear that Sandy would burst a blood vessel. Now as she observed this mother and son, there came to her something of a sense of loss. These weeks of separation from her boy had taught her how large a place he held in her life and love, but there had never been any such comradeship between them as this. So far as she could see, there never would be.

To Sandy's delight, his father announced that he had engaged rooms in a hotel at the Narrows, and would remain over to the next day. The place was proving both a revelation and an inspiration to Mr. Merrill, and he was in no hurry to leave it. Together they watched the excursion party re-embark for Toronto, in the train which had backed up to the camp for that purpose.

When the hurry-scurry of departure was over; the last plump matron having been boosted up to the car steps, the last fleeting challenge from bright eyes, and the last flutter of dainty handkerchiefs given, the Chief saved the situation.

"Now everybody swing in on the amateur performance!" he cried energetically. "Let's make it the biggest thing of the whole day."

Jerry Walker, who was gazing dreamily after the disappearing train, turned with a start, a rapt expression in his blue eyes. Amateur performance? Why, yes; certainly. He had forgotten. Of all

the unromantic duffers in the world, the Chief was the worst.

Jack Whitby and Ben Myer were already deep in the mysteries of make-up, and Skin Lightwood was besieging the Lady of the Bungalow for feminine garments lengthy enough to cover a six-feet-two frame. All the popular stunts of the season were to be brought out for the delectation of the remaining visitors, of whom there were not a few. To Mrs. Merrill, the scene was unique, and a fitting close to a most extraordinary day. The open-air pavilion, the flickering lights and the unconventional attire of the campers, together with the style of the performance, was new, to say the least.

Sandy was very busy, as he was in much demand in different parts of the programme, but he found time to hurry to her side occasionally, to find out how she liked the act just concluded, and to assure her that the next one was to be a corker. He and Barney were waiting behind the curtain to take their places as part of the wonderfully trained camel, with which Ben Myer was to take the audience by storm, when suddenly the boys outside burst into song:

“The Admiral’s got a girl!
The Admiral’s got a girl!
High over Jericho,
The Admiral’s got a girl.”

Peeping curiously through the curtain, Sandy saw what made his fists clench, and his eyes blaze.

Seated on the edge of a table after the unconventional fashion of the place, and looking bewitchingly vivacious and pretty, was Alice with the Admiral by her side. He was holding her white coat and other belongings, and under the spell of her charms was positively genial. The song evidently took Alice's fancy, for she laughed merrily and looked interestedly around the pavilion to see what it was all about, the Admiral meanwhile radiating with the pride of conquest.

"Gee, I'll punch his head for that," choked Sandy.

"Oh, you fusser!" called out Barney, with all a fourteen-year-old boy's contempt for affairs of the heart.

"What I'd like to know, is how she got acquainted with that mut."

"I—I introduced them," confessed Barney, lamely.

"Well, then, I owe you one, and I'll hand it out to you, you bet," threatened Sandy darkly, as they turned to answer to their call.

Mrs. Merrill's neighbor, a sweet, little old-fashioned lady, dressed in mourning, chatted entertainingly of the camp and its history. She knew everything about it and its marvelous growth. Her boy had been there every year for five years, she said. Mrs. Merrill felt drawn to her irresistibly, and was glad that at last there was someone in this sport-mad throng, to whom she might express her mind.

"The fact of the matter is," she confided, "I do

not altogether like it here. There is a lack of—of the finer things of life; if you know what I mean. The games seem to me to be—well, almost brutal. My nerves have been on edge all day lest somebody should be hurt.”

“Yes, indeed, I know just how you feel. You need a good nerve tonic.” The sympathy in the little lady’s voice was unmistakable.

Mrs. Merrill’s chin tilted aggressively. “Not by any means,” she pronounced emphatically. “I simply don’t believe in this sort of thing, that is all, and I cannot understand what everybody sees in it. They might, it seems to me, have less dangerous sports. I surely expect to see Sandy brought home with some serious injury.”

“That will never happen unless he is a very disobedient boy.”

“He is not that, but frankly, do you never worry about your boy? Some of the big boys might hurt him, you know.”

A spasm crossed the little lady’s face, and she looked away out into the night. “No, I never worry about John,” she said at length, with an odd little tremor in her voice.

Mrs. Merrill did not pursue the subject, for her attention was called to the stage, where Jerry Walker was announcing the last attraction of the evening. A battle between the champion heavy-weight of camp, Dad Farrington on one side, and four brave warriors, Fat Wolcott, Windy de Forrest, Crullers, and Sandy Merrill on the other.

The announcement was greeted with roars of applause. Dad, on account of his untold strength and his happy disposition, was adored by the younger boys. Never had he known defeat where it was a matter of muscle. Wonderful were the stories told around the camp fire regarding his prowess, and the new boys regarded him with open-mouthed admiration as a giant of undefeated strength.

Half the fun in camp was connected in some way with the combats with Dad, even though they invariably ended in being laid across his knees and punished in the good old orthodox way. Last season some wag had painted on his tent two open hands, and underneath, the words, "The only tools he needs." Though the device was a borrowed one, it fitted so well that it became his. The appellation "Dad" was one of real affection, and had first been given by the boys who had been with him on canoe trips, for that was his special work in camp.

Jerry announced that he would meet his opponents, not singly, but all four at one time. This especially delighted the blood-thirsty onlookers, and they howled with glee. Then the contestants stepped upon the stage and Mrs. Merrill gasped.

The four boys were padded to the neck, some with pillows and others with straw stuffed into trousers and shirts, while Dad carried as little clothing as the law allowed. With the muscles of steel standing out on arms and chest, he looked like some mighty gladiator of old. Mrs. Merrill's eyes sparkled angrily.

“Who is that horrible creature?” she demanded haughtily.

The little lady’s face glowed, and a soft lovelight crept into her eyes.

“That?” she repeated slowly and without resentment, “why, that is my boy, John.”

Mrs. Merrill’s astonishment was so great that she sank back in her seat without uttering a word. Nor did the sight of the conflict, as it waxed fast and furious, altogether revive her. Once she looked around helplessly for her husband, with a vague thought of stopping the bout, but he was laughing so heartily that he did not notice.

Like a wolf pack, the four sprang upon Dad, Sandy climbing up his back, Windy pulling his hair, and Crullers tweaking his big toe, while Fat Wolcott made a vain attempt at a knockout blow. At the end of the third round, Dad was sitting on Crullers and Fat Wolcott, who were face downwards on the floor. With one hand he held Windy, and with the other quieted Sandy’s struggles for liberty.

The victor was cheered to the echo, and it was voted a great fight.

Mr. Merrill carried away with him that night the memory of a new look in his son’s face, a straightness of gaze, and something of a dawning purpose, which made him feel that it had been immensely worth while.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HERO OF ST. JEAN

THE next afternoon, Hugh Griswold met Sandy crossing the campus, with an unusually solemn expression on his lively countenance, and remembered that he had just been saying good-by to his family at the Atherly station.

"Hello, Sandy, I've been looking for you all over," he cried cheerily. "Take a squint with your weather-eye and tell me how you'd like to go for a sail in the dinghy."

Sandy "squinted" and the result was quite satisfactory.

"You bet I'll come," he agreed emphatically.

"All right, come along and I'll let you be the skipper and the whole crew, provided you allow the passenger to give directions about the handling of the boat."

"Sure! When do we start?"

"In five minutes. I'm going to the office for a minute, and I'll be right down."

Sandy had had just enough instruction in sailing to make him want more, and the prospect of an afternoon on the lake in Griswold's company was an added attraction. He was on hand promptly at the waterfront, which was always a busy spot in the afternoons, and down at the end of the wharf found

the trim little craft looking like a cork on the water.

The camp fleet, as usual, was nearly all in requisition, either for instruction, pleasure or business. Two war canoe crews were practicing for a race with an Orillia Club, and the Admiral was taking a party of the younger boys to Couchiching Park in the *Silver Spray*.

Sandy envied none of them, as under Griswold's directions, he set his sail and cast adrift from his moorings at the wharf. This was a highly important occasion, for he was doing it all himself.

With one hand on the tiller and the other on the sheet line, he navigated the little boat out of the sheltered bay, where the breeze was so slight that it was almost imperceptible.

"Now then, Mr. Skipper, which way is the wind blowing?" asked Griswold, as he sat back in luxuriant idleness, and watched Sandy's eager efforts.

"Hold on a minute and I'll tell you," responded the doughty skipper, wetting the back of his hand with his tongue, and holding it up for the wind to blow on.

"From the west," he announced triumphantly.

"The boy guessed right the very first time," quoted Griswold. "Now I think we had better sail around the west side of Chief's Island. In that case, you will have to tack into the wind. Your sail is just a little too flat. There, that is better. Remember that in beating to windward, the sail should be kept full, and then when it begins to flap you know you are running too close to the wind."

In the open lake the breeze freshened somewhat, and Sandy found that he had his hands full at first to keep from running too close to the wind, but he quickly grasped the idea underlying the orders given, and did not often make the same mistake twice.

It was a perfect day, and the scene was one of great beauty. The blue and silver of the cloud-flecked sky was reflected in the limpid depths of the water, and the atmosphere had all the crystal transparency of the north. Before them as they sailed westward, Orillia sloped up from the lake, looking like a veritable dream-city, while to the north, Big Chief, and Horse Shoe Island, stood distinct and clear as twin emeralds.

Hugh Griswold consulted his watch. "We have two hours ahead of us to do as we please in," he said thoughtfully. "What shall we be? Pirates, filibusters or Iroquois braves? Take your choice. You can be either Captain Kidd, Henry de Champlain, or Big Chief Wind in the Face."

Sandy glanced at him quickly; he was evidently in earnest. "Do you ever make believe?" he asked, half fearful of an amused smile.

"Lots of times. I often wonder if I'll ever get over it. People who never make believe, miss a whole lot, don't you think?"

Sandy nodded. This was new doctrine from a grown-up, but his attention was all needed now to come about on the other tack. When this was accomplished and he was running along with the bow

of the boat in line with a barn on a distant hill, he said, "I didn't think anybody ever did it but me. What do you like to be best?"

"Oh, I don't know; I've been everybody under the sun, I think, at one time or another. When I was a little chap, I liked Robin Hood best of all——"

"So did I," interrupted Sandy. "Isn't that funny! But now I'm dead stuck on Indians. I think it's great here at camp, because you know they really were here one time. My, I wish I knew more about them!"

"Well, if it is any consolation to you to know it, they don't improve on acquaintance! Your noble Indian of the past was a cruel, bloodthirsty creature."

"Oh, I know that, but they were corkers to fight, and they had a dandy time of it, never having to work, or do anything they didn't want to, such as wearing clothes or things like that."

Griswold laughed, and turned his attention to the running of the boat.

They were rounding Chief's Island by this time, and the breeze was growing stronger. "Coil up the end of your sheet-line so that you will be ready to run it out in case a strong puff of wind strikes the sail," he suggested, and Sandy obeyed.

There was a sense of power in feeling the little craft dancing over the water, and obeying every slight touch at the tiller.

When they had rounded the island and were sailing before the wind, Griswold returned to the sub-

ject. "If you want to be thrilled through and through with the story of heroic deeds, then read about Brébeuf and his associates and what they did and suffered among the Hurons here."

"I never heard of them."

"There are many more like you, but let me tell you that in the history of this whole continent, there is no other story like it."

"Who were they?"

"Catholic missionaries who came up from Quebec and lived here among the Indians when this country was a vast wilderness."

"Oh, missionaries!" repeated Sandy disappointedly. Then he remembered what Jerry Walker had told him of the man before him, and his eyes took fire.

"Tell me about them," he urged eagerly. The word missionary was taking on new meaning.

"I wish I could," replied Griswold earnestly, "but there are some stories which you can never tell as they ought to be told. If I could paint a picture of these Indians with their filth, their vileness, their cruelty, and then help you to see the men who came among them, but I don't think I can. They were Frenchmen of gentle birth and of the highest culture. They came up from Quebec by way of the Upper Ottawa, Lake Nipissing and the French River into Georgian Bay, for the sole purpose of converting the Hurons to Christianity.

"They were not wanted, of course, but they held on, living in Indian wigwams, suffering cold and hun-

ger and persecution, and finally death. The death of Brébeuf and Lalemant is one of the most stupendous stories of suffering and triumph over torture and death ever told. Then there was Garnier; I must tell you about him, because he died in the mission village of St. Jean Baptiste, which stood where Orillia now stands, they say.

“The Iroquois were on the war path, burning and killing everywhere. Brébeuf and Lalemant were dead, and the whole Huron nation was being exterminated, when one day early in December, a Christian Huron came to St. Jean with the news that the enemy were on the march to attack the village.

“The warriors were not afraid, and when, after a day or two, the enemy did not appear, they went out to meet the victory which was so slow in coming. They missed the Iroquois, who came by a round-about way, reaching the village when its protectors were absent.

“A man and woman who had just left St. Jean told them of its unprotected state, and they rushed in to do their dreadful work.

“There was only one white man there: Father Garnier, who was visiting the sick, when he heard the uproar, and knew only too well what it meant.

“A number of the Christians had rushed to the church, and he hastened there to give them his blessing, and to tell them to do their best to escape. They begged him to escape with them, but he refused, and hurried from cabin to cabin, even in the midst of the flames, baptizing and doing his best to

help people to die well. There wasn't anybody around to praise him, or to tell the story, but he never thought of himself: he knew his last hour had come, and right there where you are looking now, in the heart of the wilderness, far away from his own kind, he only thought of the souls of the dying savages.

"At last he was struck by a bullet, and a savage stripped him of his clothing. Even then he tried to crawl to a wounded man, but failed.

"The Iroquois hastened their departure lest the Huron warriors should return; that is how he and the others escaped worse torture. Those who were not killed, were taken captive. The old and weak were killed, and all who showed signs of grief: it was a crime to shed a tear, and they demanded that their prisoners should march to captivity as if they were marching to their triumph. One Christian mother wept for the death of her infant and was killed on the spot.

"The priests from the nearest mission village came to look for Father Garnier's body, and when they found it they wrapped it in some of their own clothes and buried it where his church had been. One of them, writing about it later, said, 'It was truly a rich treasure to deposit in so desolate a spot.'"

As Sandy listened, with his eyes turning again and again to the town at the end of the lake, the story was very real to him. In imagination he could see, instead of the beautiful modern town, the

Indian village with its palisades and its cabins, and the dark forest hemming it in on all but its water side. He saw the hostile savages stealing from the forest gloom, and bursting upon the defenseless village to slay and burn; and clear and distinct in the picture was the figure of the man who stood alone amid the savage crew, a Christian hero, caring nothing for death or torture, his thought all for others, and for the Master whom he served.

"It was great!" he said, when the story was finished. "I'm glad you told me about it. I'll always think about it now when I see Orillia. I wonder why he did it; he could have got away if he had tried, I believe."

Griswold did not answer for a moment, but in his face was the light that Sandy sometimes saw there. "I believe only one thing could make a man do a deed like that," he said at length, "and that is friendship with Jesus Christ. A fellow that is on speaking terms with Him, just feels like doing anything for Him. It isn't hard. It's easy."

Sandy was stirred as he had never been before. This was a kind of friendship he knew nothing about, but if Griswold found it worth doing and daring for, he wanted it, too. He always made up his mind quickly, and then and there he registered a resolve which was to bear fruit later.

If Griswold read his thoughts, he wisely made no sign.

"What about the village warriors?" asked Sandy after a pause.

"Oh, they grew uneasy after a couple of days, when they saw nothing of the enemy, and they hastened back to find nothing but ash heaps and the ground strewn with the dead.

"They sat down on the ground without lifting their eyes, or uttering even a sigh: for half a day they sat there like marble statues, for that was the savage way of mourning."

"It looks to me as though there might be a fire over there now," remarked Sandy, pointing to a part of the town in the direction of the railway tracks, where an unusual volume of smoke had just begun to rise.

"That's so, it does, but perhaps it is only an engine on the track."

"It looks more like the work of an Injun," punned Sandy, with a grin.

"Let's get over there and we'll find out. Don't be afraid to let her run up on her beam ends a little. She'll splash some, but we're not afraid of water. She'll make better time that way."

The little dinghy spun merrily over the water and they steered for the nearest dock, to what was proving to be no small conflagration. Then it was that Sandy met with his first mishap. In his excitement, he failed to obey orders, and allowed the boat to get around so far that the sail jibed, and as the boom swung over, it rapped him on the head.

Griswold uttered quick words of warning regarding carelessness of this kind as he grabbed the tiller and the sheet line, and brought the boat to the dock;

where they were quickly followed by the camp launch and a number of canoes.

They fastened their boats to the wharf and sped quickly to the point a few blocks away, where great sheets of flame and columns of smoke were belching forth from a large factory-like building.

"It's Gray's furniture factory!" shouted someone. "There are tons of paint and gasoline there. If they don't get it put out, there's sure to be an explosion."

CHAPTER XV

THE FIRE-FIGHTERS

THE burning factory was a long, two-story building, surrounded by several smaller buildings of the same concern, facing a street near the railroad tracks. So swiftly had the flames progressed that it was now a roaring furnace. The town fire brigade was doing valiant work, but all to no purpose. The interior was a mass of flames, running up to the roof, shooting fiery tongues from every window and door, and belching out great gusts of blinding, choking smoke. It was only a question of moments when the roof would fall. The building was doomed, but everything must be done to keep the fire from spreading.

In one of the smaller factory buildings was stored the gasoline and oil. Fortunately the wind blew the sparks in the opposite direction, but a hose played upon it constantly. All around there were small frame houses, the homes of working men, many of them in the path of the falling cinders.

When Griswold and Sandy arrived on the scene they found excited crowds of the town people, as well as practically all of Camp Couchiching there ahead of them. The Chief was organizing a bucket brigade and the boys needed no urging to do their best. Many of them were in their bathing suits,

having rushed out from camp, not dreaming that the fire was as far away as Orillia. From hand to hand the buckets were passed, faster and yet faster as the strain of excitement grew. If the flames once spread to other buildings or reached the oil and gasoline, they would be beyond the control of the local fire department.

Even the Admiral worked with a will, side by side with Whitby and Myer, and no one thought it strange.

When the roof crashed in, the sparks flew like a fiery shower, and already the people in the frame cottages were working frantically to save their homes. Here and there a tiny flame would start up only to be extinguished by eager watchers, but there were so many places to guard at once, that there was grave danger at any moment of some place getting beyond control. It all depended upon volunteers and upon the owners, for the fire department had its hands full with the factory.

A little back from the other cottages, and partially hidden by heavily laden apple trees, stood a two-story, unpainted building, with no sign of life about it. It was not strange that no one noticed a sinister flame curling up its side wall, and eating silently and swiftly into the old wood, which was as dry as tinder. People were too busy rescuing their own belongings and enlisting the aid of volunteers to ward off the threatened destruction to their own homes.

It was not the time for sober thinking or observing, but for frantic action.

That morning the anxious and overworked widow McDonald had found it necessary to be up especially early, for it was her day to work for Mrs. Arnold, away on the further edge of the town. The three children were to be washed and fed, ready for school, and her aged and bed-ridden mother to be cared for and left comfortable for the day. It was cruel necessity which drove her to leave the helpless invalid alone for the entire day, but there was no other way. Kind hearted neighbors looked in occasionally, and fortunately the sick woman's wants were few. Those who visited "Grandma Watson" always came away refreshed and brightened, as one does who has seen an unexpected burst of sunshine.

This afternoon she lay in her bare, whitewashed room, a weary little figure, with a heritage of pain, and a wealth of fragrant memories. She had not always been old and helpless. Once she had been the center of an interesting circle of friends, but she had outlived them all. She had had money and a comfortable home, but it, too, was gone. One thing alone remained, her faith in God, and her communion with the unseen.

This it was, which made her old face shine with a hidden, inner light, and drew to her bedside many who were in need of comfort.

Her bed had been so placed that she might look out of the window, and have all the pleasure that came from sunshine, blue sky and green trees. The

apples were her special delight and she had named them, every one. She had watched them grow from buds to blossoms, and from blossoms to green little knobs, which in turn had gradually developed into the sonsy red-cheeked apples of to-day.

Out over the tree-tops she could see the factory, with its tall smoke stack and its sounds of busy, restless life. Her keen eyes saw the first signs of the fire and startled, and fascinated, she watched its progress. She knew the danger, and saw the wind sweep the sparks and cinders in her direction. She guessed the fruitless efforts of the firemen and heard the clamor of the excited throngs. She knew by some sixth sense, just when the stray sparks ignited in a sheltered crevice of the old tinder-box she called home. With bated breath she waited for the results, and they were not long in coming. First there were the tiny puffs of smoke across her window, then the hungry crackle of flames somewhere, not far away.

Grandma Watson was not afraid of death; sometimes she had even prayed that it might come, but never had she thought of its coming like this. To be caught like a rat in a trap, to be forgotten and left to die, when she might so easily be rescued,—if someone would only remember in time. It was hard.

She raised herself in bed in white-faced horror, and tried to scream, but her voice died away in a terrified pant. Then falling back on the pillow, she closed her eyes, feeling that it was all over. Her

voice could never be heard in the din outside, anyway.

Just for an instant she lay there in awful despair; then a great light broke over her wrinkled old face, and she clasped her hands in an attitude of prayer.

"Why, how could I forget?" she cried. "He has been with me all my journey, and He is with me now." Then as the smoke thickened in the little room, she murmured in trembling, triumphant tones: "'When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.' He said it; and oh, it's true, it's true."

Then there was a fumbling at the door, and it suddenly burst open, admitting a man and a black cloud of smoke. The man, half blinded by the smoke, strode over to the bed, and Grandma held out her arms to him as an infant might to its mother.

"Why, boy, I just knew you'd come," she gasped joyously.

"Yes, Grandma, I'm here," said Hugh Griswold, as he gently and swiftly enveloped her in a woolen blanket and lifting her in his arms, started the perilous descent through the burning house. The woolen blanket prevented the fumes from choking Grandma, but her rescuer had no such protection. The stairs were already burning, and curling flames leaped along the railing as he staggered blindly down with his burden. He could not see, and all he knew was that somewhere ahead of him was a door which led to the open air. It seemed hours before he

reached it and ready hands relieved him of his load, while hungry flames leaped out after him. Only then did he realize that his bare right arm and shoulder were scorched in the furnace he had passed through.

Ten minutes later the house was a charred ruin, and Grandma, for whom a bed had been improvised in a safe spot some distance away, was begging for a word with her rescuer, but he could not be found.

The red-cheeked apples were baked on the trees, and the boys found time from their exciting duties to sample them occasionally, and pronounce them good. By this time people were frantically emptying their homes of their household goods, and the boys had set to work with a will to assist. Their intentions were of the best, but owing to the wild excitement of the moment, their success was not always what it might be. They realized that everything possible must be got out of the houses at once; and the result was that in some houses, mirrors, bedroom crockery, bureau drawers, and even watches and jewelry were pitched from upstairs windows; while in others mattresses, pillows and clothing were carefully carried downstairs.

It was refreshing to see Ben Myer, the critic and humorist of camp, come rushing out of a burning house, wildly holding aloft a pair of corsets and a bottle of soothing syrup which he had rescued. For once it was left for others to see the humor of the occasion.

Some of the householders, however, managed to

keep their self-control admirably. Among them was a tall, angular woman to whose assistance Sandy and Barney had hastened.

"Yes, you may help," she said in a high, rasping voice, "but mind you set everything out in the yard just where I tell you; I'll have my eye on you."

"Do you—do you think we want to steal your things?" exclaimed Sandy indignantly, as he stepped back.

"No, I dont," she snapped, "but there are so many sharpers around at a time like this that a body's got to be mighty careful. Here, take these chairs out quick."

The boys took the chairs ungraciously, and were soon running at her behests with everything portable, assisted by a flock of children which it was hard to believe were all hers. There were ten of them of all sizes.

"The feather beds and quilts 'll go in a pile over there in the corner, and Eliza Jane 'll set on 'em. Tom, you set over beside the chairs and tables and don't you let anybody lay a hand on 'em, d'ye hear?"

When the house was emptied, there were ten piles in the yard, and on each pile sat a solemn-faced youngster.

"I never take no chances," remarked their mother grimly, as the boys turned away unthanked.

On the back fence in the next yard, in the midst of the smoke and excitement, sat Fat Wolcott, munching baked apples and eagerly devouring the contents of a yellow-backed volume.

When Sandy hailed him, he triumphantly waved it aloft. "It's the history of the Shaw case, and it's great!" he cried excitedly. "I found it on that pile over there and there's a whole lot more like it."

At last all danger of further conflagration was over: the flames were extinguished, and the crowds dispersed.

Sandy had seen nothing of Griswold since his rescue of Grandma Watson, and he hastened to the wharf where they had left the dinghy.

He found him there with his shoulder and arm swathed in bandages, and his face unusually pale.

"No, I'm not badly hurt," he said lightly in answer to Sandy's startled exclamation. "Some of the fellows have just been practicing first aid on me, that's all. The Chief is coming back with us, so we'll wait for him here."

The boys who had come in the war-canoes were starting back in high glee, each with a supply of paint, secured from the burning paint shop. It was for "social purposes," they explained.

"No more mixing your tooth paste with your breakfast cocoa and your shoe polish this season, when there's a social duty to perform," exulted Jack Whitby, as he took his place at the stern and gave the signal to start.

In a few minutes the Chief came hurrying down. "I've just been having the time of my life," he exclaimed enthusiastically, while he loosened the boat from her moorings.

"Paint?" inquired Sandy eagerly.

"I've just been in to see Grandma Watson," he went on, ignoring the insinuation. "You ought to have gone in to see her, Griswold, really."

"Not on your life; there is one thing I cannot stand, and that is fuss. I'd rather face a fire any day."

"Well, anyway, you missed it. I'm not easily moved, but I feel as though I had had a little glimpse of Heaven. Though they have lost everything they owned, the old lady is so full of joy and praise over her deliverance that she is just bubbling over. She is eager to see the 'dear boy' who saved her and I have a whole string of messages for you, which I'll give you from time to time. You head her prayer list from this time on. I found her at a neighbor's where she had been taken in; you see, the whole family is homeless."

"Can nothing be done to help them?" asked Griswold, his interest kindling at once.

"I don't know, but I suppose the town will take it up."

"I'll see about it this very day," said Griswold with decision, and he kept his word.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PIRATES

A DAY'S scouting on Chief's Island, how alluring it sounded! There were to be lessons in woodcraft and signaling, all sorts of trailing and tracking games, dinners cooked over scout fires and the fun of going and coming in the war-canoes. The disappointment to Sandy and Barney was keen, but if they wished to pass the second class swimming and life saving tests they must be on hand this morning to get in all the practise possible.

Sandy's interest in scout work had not dwindled, though he had definitely decided not to join until after his return to Toronto. Mr. Adams, the scout master, had been very kind in teaching them so many things and the fact that he had charge of the expedition promised much in the way of pleasure and instruction. Their faces were solemn as they watched the war-canoes fade into the distance, but they soon forgot in the zest of the day's work.

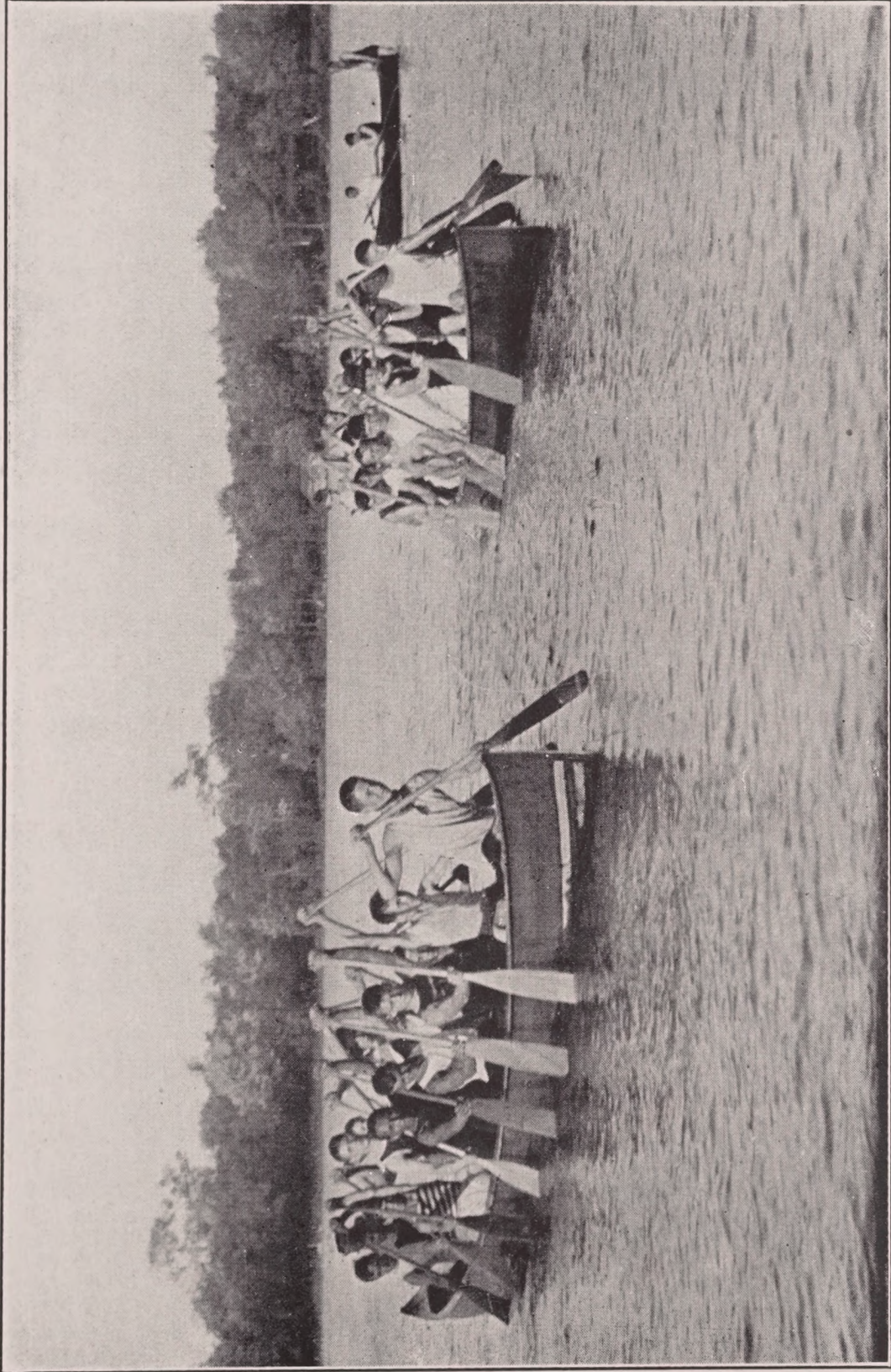
There was another whose chagrin at not being with the scouting party was of a more lasting character. The Admiral was deeply offended that he, an assistant scout master and fellow countryman, should have been deliberately ignored by Adams when making up his party. The more he pondered over it,

the greater the slight seemed and he longed to get even. He mentioned the matter to Thompson, but received slight encouragement. That young man had learned to look upon him with suspicion since the fracas in which they had both figured so prominently. After that he consulted only with himself, and to such good purpose that after a word with the Chief, he appeared at dinner, his ruddy countenance fairly oozing satisfaction.

As Sandy ate his dinner, his thoughts were with the scouts, cooking their meal over the little fires and eating it under the blue sky. For once he had nothing special to look forward to for the afternoon. Mr. Griswold was the officer of the day and consequently was occupied every moment with his duties.

It was a relief, therefore, when the Chief announced at the close of the meal that the Admiral would take a party over to Chief's Island in the *Silver Spray*, while giving instructions in sailing. Sailing was Sandy's latest craze and he decided to be on hand.

Promptly at three o'clock, the Admiral stepped aboard the sail boat with all the dignity of the first officer of an Atlantic liner. His subordinates tumbled into place over the sides, jostled each other and crowded in, fore and aft, until not an inch of space was unoccupied. With head erect and chest out, he trod the deck or tried to, where he could get a footing, and issued orders, assigning to each learner his post and his work.



WAR CANOES

"Jim Phillips, stand by the bow line."

"Billy Browne, stand by the stern line."

"Norman Hallock, take the tiller."

"Barney Allen, take the lookout on the bowsprit."

Sandy listened eagerly as a dozen or more boys were placed in charge of jib halyard, jib sheet, foresail, peak halyard, throat halyard, and so on. Barney was already astride the bowsprit, under the impression that the safety of the expedition depended entirely on him. His business was to keep a lookout for shoals, and call a warning. There were not a few of these in Lake Couchiching, so his position was not a sinecure.

It was too much for Sandy; he could stand it no longer. "What am I to do?" he interrupted rashly.

"You'll do as you're told," roared the Admiral, who was now in his element. "Stand by the pump for your interference, sir; I'll teach you who's running this business, by Jove."

Sandy meekly took his place at the pump amid the grins of his companions. Everybody knew what the work there meant, for the *Silver Spray* was anything but water-tight.

"Now then, hoist the mainsail," shouted the commander. "Here, you greenhorns; offer no suggestions. My word, but I'll have to teach you who is in command here."

"Steady there, you're too high with that peak halyard."

"Faster there with the throat, d'ye hear?"

"Hello there, you landlubbers, don't you see that the jaws of the boom are jammed, and that you can never hoist that throat with the peak up in the air that way? Lower your peak, and use your miserable brains once in a while."

"Now, get that throat belayed there. Quick, you blockheads, don't stand around. There, look what you've done; you've got the bag all out of the sail. Now you've got it so low that the boom will strike the man at the tiller."

"All right. Hoist your foresail. Let go your bow line."

"Port your helm."

"Lower your center board."

"Quick, there. Push her off!"

Skin Lightwood, who had bestowed his tall form at full length across half a dozen other passengers, raised himself, and adjusting a make-believe monocle to his eye, slowly surveyed the Admiral.

"My word!" he ejaculated, and sank back, overcome.

There was a general sigh of relief from the crew when the turmoil of starting was over, and with a light breeze blowing, the boat gently swung out of the bay.

When the Chief was in command, or gave sailing instruction, which he frequently did, it was so different. Then everybody hung on his slightest word and jumped to do his bidding, and the boy who was given the hardest task was the most highly favored. The

Admiral's tone and manner stirred resentment, even in the hearts of those most anxious to learn.

"Set your sails for Kilgour's Point, for the first tack," he shouted, and the tars obeyed rather sullenly.

Here the unemployed grew so noisy, that even the Admiral's stentorian tones could not be heard at the other end of the boat, whereupon his rage became so terrible, that he frightened them into silence for the space of three minutes.

"I'll jolly well show you who you're dealing with," he threatened in the interval of silence. "Billy Browne, on the order to come about, what do you do?"

"I don't know," replied Billy, hesitatingly.

"You don't know. Listen to him, the blockhead, after all I've done to try and teach him, he doesn't know," cried the Admiral, scathingly.

"I never took a lesson before," exclaimed Billy, indignantly.

"Dashed nonsense. Hallock, you tell me."

"Let fly the jib, ease off the foresail, haul in the mainsail."

"All right, then; everybody ready."

"Ready; come about!"

There was a general flopping over to the other side by the passengers, and then the crew changed places, all but Sandy, whose arms were aching with his strenuous work at the pump. For some reason best known to himself, the Admiral left him there, and when sometimes he stopped to rest, a shout for

the man at the pump to keep on working, would start him again.

Meanwhile, Barney, astride the bowsprit, was having the time of his life. Before him and around him was the open lake, with its glittering expanse but slightly ruffled by the breeze. Away on the western shore, he could see the cluster of white tents of the children's shelter, and to the north Chief's Island was now getting nearer every moment.

He was straining his eyes for the first glimpse of the scouts, when a sudden shout behind him almost made him drop into the lake.

"Shoals ahead, you dolt!"

It was the Admiral, and he quickly gave orders to the crew to avoid disaster. Just for a moment Barney had forgotten his duty, and he was sent back in disgrace. His discomfiture was Sandy's gain, however, for he was ordered to take his place at the pump.

Chief's Island had received its name from being for generations the property of the Yellowheads, the hereditary chiefs of the Rama band of Indians. To the Indian it was sacred ground, and had never been occupied except as a place in which to bury the dead. As far back into the misty past as story and tradition reached, even the bravest warrior stole past it in his birch-bark canoe with muffled paddles and bated breath.

To him the sighing of the wind through the tall pine trees, the fluttering of the leaves of the moose maple along the shore, the lapping of the water on

the stones and all the subdued, intangible sounds of the forest were but the voices of the mighty dead, who had passed over to the happy hunting grounds. It was left for the whites to invade its shores with alien feet and unheeding laughter, when out for a summer holiday.

The Admiral had been to the island once with a scouting party, and he knew that in all probability the boys and their leaders were busily engaged in woodcraft instruction in a favorite spot on the other side of the island. He had counted on this in his secret plans for their discomfiture, and now grew anxious lest his plans should miscarry.

The boys were now all eagerness for the first sight of the scouting party. When Sandy left the pump he was given no other post, and he stood with his eyes fixed on the wooded shores secretly hoping that he might be the first to see the boys.

The island seemed utterly devoid of life, however, except for a white tent at its northern end.

"Dashed bad scouting," grumbled the Admiral, with a hidden note of satisfaction in his voice.

"What's the matter with it?" demanded one of the bolder spirits.

"Matter enough; if Adams knew his business, he'd have sentries posted to warn him of the coming of a vessel."

"Maybe he has, but isn't letting us know all he's doing."

"Hello, I see the canoes," cried Sandy, pointing

to a sheltered cove at the extreme southern point of the island.

All eyes were turned in that direction and it was quickly decided that Sandy was right. The two war-canoes were drawn up on the shore, but everything was as silent as the abode of the dead. The Admiral's eyes shone with glee, and it was with difficulty that he restrained himself. He stood looking out over the water while the boys discussed the situation, and then remarked with exaggerated carelessness, "It would be dashed worth while to capture those canoes."

The idea took like wildfire; that was the very thing. Everybody wanted to have a hand in it, and the Admiral grew genial and companionable under the light of a big idea. Orders were given to come about; the anchor was dropped and the boat lowered, and three sturdy volunteers were soon on their way to make the capture.

It was impossible to bring the *Silver Spray* very near to shore, as the water was quite shallow for a considerable distance out.

"I'll show them that I can do better scouting with a lot of tenderfeet than they can with all their scouts," said the Admiral proudly.

The boys exchanged glances half amused, half indignant, for the Admiral's blunders in woodcraft, and scout-craft,—in fact, in everything except sailing, was the joke of camp. Everything else was forgotten, however, when someone excitedly pointed out the scouts coming out of the woods to the

shore a quarter of a mile further north on the island.

They had evidently not seen the boat, which had just been pulled up on shore, neither were they seen by the three raiders. They had just come from a most interesting lesson in distinguishing trees and plants, and stood staring at the *Silver Spray* as if it had been a phantom ship.

The Admiral grew beside himself with excitement. "Dash it all, why don't they hurry up," he cried angrily. "Ahoy there; hurry up with those canoes. Come back at once, d'ye hear?"

His bellowing voice rang out over the water like a siren on a foggy night, reaching the party of scouts on the shore as well as those he was trying to influence.

"Great Scott! he'll queer the whole business," cried Jim Phillips. "Come on, let's mix them up," and he proceeded to put into execution a very good imitation of semaphore signaling, an example which was followed by the others.

The shore party was frankly puzzled: the Admiral's frenzied shouts in which they could distinguish the words "war-canoes" and "hurry up," together with the astonishing signaling of the boys, bewildered them, and they gazed in silence waiting for a clue, when suddenly from behind a point in the island, a war-canoë, manned by three campers, shot into view. Then the significance of the whole proceeding burst upon them. They had been outwitted, and by the Admiral, of all people.

The scout law volunteers the information that "a scout smiles and whistles under all circumstances." There are exceptions, and this was one of them. From the scoutmaster down to the youngest tenderfoot, they were angry and disgusted, and vowed dire vengeance upon the boat, its commander, and all its crew.

Some of them even failed to see the humor of it when the black flag of the pirate, in the shape of Fat Wolcott's dark flannel shirt, was run up to the mast-head, as the little vessel turned and sailed away under full sail in the brisk wind.

In the meanwhile the Admiral was demanding why all three canoes had not been captured, but was mollified when he found that every paddle had been brought over, leaving the other canoes useless.

"Now for home," he cried exultantly, and gave orders to steer on the starboard tack, his face radiant with satisfaction.

Not a boy stirred to obey, and he repeated the order impatiently.

"You don't mean to go back to camp and leave those fellows on the island with no way of getting home, do you?" demanded Whitey Wilkinson, one of the older boys, and a tent leader, as he diligently and painstakingly printed the scout motto, "be prepared" on the handles of the captured paddles.

"To be sure I do. It'll serve them jolly well right, too. Now quick, everybody."

"No you don't!" exclaimed half a dozen voices at once. "We're in for fun, but we're decent."

"Oh, all right; then we'll come back after supper."

"Not on your life, we won't, for we won't go home," asserted Whitey emphatically, and the other boys agreed unanimously.

This was downright mutiny; but it was clearly final and the Admiral was forced to give in. Sulkily he gave the order to cruise around a little while in order to keep the scouts in suspense.

His gloom was relieved somewhat by the appearance of a launch with a number of pretty girls on board. They were interested in the *Silver Spray* and its occupants, and even waved a laughing salute as they passed. The Admiral beamed on them as long as they were in sight.

After sailing away to give the impression to the marooned party that they were deserted, they returned to the island only to find it as silent and forsaken as before.

Not a scout came out of the woods to hail them, or to fling defiance at them. Apparently they had taken the matter philosophically, and had gone back to the study of trees and the finding of trails.

"It's mighty queer where they can be," mused Sandy as he and Barney eagerly scanned the shore for signs of life.

"Now anybody can take the canoe and paddles back that wants to," remarked the Admiral caustically, as they cast anchor once more.

Before Sandy knew it he had tumbled into the war-canoe with a dozen other braves, and with his

heart beating fast with excitement, silently kept time with his paddle. It took but a few minutes' steady paddling to reach the sheltered spot from which the canoe had been taken. Before they reached the landing place they stopped and Whitey, who was in charge of the party, said, "I think I had better go and investigate, and if there's any trouble you just make off as fast as you can. Don't let them get hold of you, whatever you do."

"Oh, I say, let me come, too," cried Sandy eagerly.

"All right, Merrill, come along, if you're game," replied Whitey, making off. Sandy jumped into the water, and in a moment they were cautiously climbing a rather steep bank a few feet back from shore, while their companions in the war-canoe watched their movements with breathless interest. The utter absence of sound or sign of human life on the island was suspicious. It was altogether unlikely that their movements were unwatched, and they must exercise the greatest care.

A few days before there had come to the camp a young man, a German, who spoke little English, and that with great difficulty. The boys were surprised to find him sitting on a log beside a clump of underbrush, gazing abstractedly into space.

"Where are the fellows?" demanded Whitey, without preliminary salutation.

The German looked dense, and slowly shook his head. "I do not know," he enunciated with deliberation.

“When will they be back?”

“They say not for one-half hour; I do not know.”

“Oh, all right. Come on, Merrill; there’s no use hanging round here.”

They turned to go, when such a blood-curdling war whoop as Chief’s Island had not heard in many a long moon, fairly lifted them off their feet. Every log and bush gave up its warrior, and they were surrounded.

Whitey broke loose in the direction of the water, but for Sandy, retreat in that quarter was cut off, and he made a dash for the woods. His chances were small, and in a moment he was in the hands of the enemy. Two stern looking scouts pinioned his hands behind his back and he was tied securely to a tree, while the sound of tumult and shouting floated up to him from the water.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CAPTIVE

BY sheer fleetness of foot Whitey outstripped his enemies, and reached the war-canoe which stood ready to put out into deep water. He climbed into it in the nick of time, for the nearest scout almost had him in his grasp. The water was full of disgruntled scouts, wading up to their necks some of them, and hurling challenges to the canoe-party to come and fight it out in the water.

The boys on the other hand were indignant that their friendly offices in bringing back the canoe and paddles should be so ungratefully received, and after a few choice epithets such as "sore-heads," "cowards" and so on, had been exchanged, they put back to the sailboat in no amiable state of mind, with one of their number a captive in the hands of the enemy.

The Admiral was furious. "Why didn't you do as you were told, and leave the ungrateful curs to stay there for the night?" he stormed. "We'll do it now though, by Jove!"

"And leave Sandy there?" broke in Barney hotly.

"Well, what if we do? What business had he going there and getting caught?"

"Now see here," said Norman Hallock, another

of the boy leaders, "let's talk common sense. We never intended to take their old canoe away. It was all a joke from the start, and we can't help it if they are sore over it. The canoe and paddles have got to go back, that's all there is to it."

"I'll see them in Jericho first," declared the Admiral emphatically.

"Why don't you call for a couple of volunteers who are willing to sacrifice themselves," suggested someone.

The Admiral looked disgusted, but there was a chorus of approval from the ranks.

"I'll go," said Norman Hallock quietly.

"And I," cried Whitey, who was itching to go back and fight it out.

It was to be expected that Norman Hallock would go, for he loved the bright face of danger, and usually volunteered for any difficult task, whether it was climbing the tall flag-pole on the campus when that became a necessity, or acting as diver where the body of a drowned student was being sought for on Lake Simcoe, when volunteers were called for from the Y. M. C. A. camp for that purpose. He was champion junior fencer of Canada, and was instructor in that department at camp.

Once more the war-canoe with its cargo of paddles started on its way, and was watched with breathless interest by everyone on board the sailboat. The scouts still thirsting for blood, were wading around in the water awaiting the coming of the volunteers. They formed a cordon across the cove, and others ad-

vanced to meet the canoe, as it was quite possible to do for a considerable distance in the shallow water. The watchers grew more and more excited, for the volunteers were paddling straight into the clutches of the enemy. But just when all seemed lost, the canoe swung suddenly around and shot quickly aside to deep water once more and to a spot a hundred yards away, where there was opportunity for a landing.

Whitey and Hallock jumped out, pulled the canoe up as they ran, and then just a little faster than they had ever run before, they bounded up the steep bank, and off into the woods, with the enemy like a howling wolf-pack in full pursuit.

Meanwhile, Sandy, a captive in the woods, chafing against the bonds which held him to the tree, had heard the din of battle. He could only guess what was going on. Judging by the angry exclamations of the shore party, and the receding and satisfied voices of those in the canoe, Whitey had escaped. If he could only work his hands loose he believed he could get away himself. Everything was silent and deserted in the woods, the attention of the scouts still being directed to the canoe and the *Silver Spray*. Persistently he wriggled and twisted his hands and wrists, ignoring the hurt made by the cords sinking into his flesh; at any moment the enemy might flock back.

At last he succeeded in wrenching them free, and feeling that he had not an instant to lose, he reached for his knife, and quickly cut the cords that bound

him to the tree. Just one free breath, and then for the woods and liberty, as with head down and lips compressed, he bounded off.

"No you don't!" The voice was simultaneous with a jerk on his collar, and the blocking of his pathway. He was surrounded by three sturdy guards who held him relentlessly while he struggled for freedom. He fought desperately, and for a moment hoped to win. During the weeks since he had come to camp his muscles had toughened and strengthened wonderfully, but his captors were no weaklings, and he was soon overcome.

"Let me go!" he choked wrathfully. "Nice lot of fellows you are. Three of you piling on to one."

They laughed triumphantly. "That's all right, Sandy," said Tim Jameison cheerfully. "It's back to the woods for yours till we're through with you. No use getting sore over it though."

They were busily engaged in making his bonds doubly secure, when Whitey and Hallock bounded through the woods some distance away, followed by the hue and cry of the land party.

Sandy felt the excitement of the chase surging all around him and then die away. After a little the pursuers came back in twos and threes, and he gathered from their words that as Whitey and Hallock had returned the canoe and paddles, they were to be let go where they pleased.

After that the captive bound to the tree was the center of interest, and they inspected him judicially. He speculated curiously as to what his fate would be

and he was not at all reassured when, after an interested discussion with Jack Whitby and Ben Myer, Mr. Adams called a council of war to decide on the fate of the prisoner. Sandy noticed that a dozen of the boys withdrew, before the others gathered in a circle in a broad cleared space, just far enough away for him not to hear what they said. It was exasperating, and he strained vainly at his fetters, succeeding only in making them sink deeper into his flesh.

Through the trees he could catch a mere glimpse of the circle in which were seated Adams, Carewe, Windy de Forrest, and a dozen other familiar figures. There was much serious discussion, and then two boys came gravely forward and cut the prisoner's cords, and conducted him to the council. Not the muscle of a face moved as an opening was made in the circle and he was marched up directly in front of the scoutmaster. Everything was grave and serious, suspiciously so.

Sandy determined not to "crawl," and he walked with his head thrown back and an exaggerated look of unconcern on his round face. His eyes flashed defiance into those of the judge and he wanted to tell them all what he thought of them.

"Sandy Merrill!" The scoutmaster's voice was severe and threatening, though Sandy thought he detected the slightest glint of amusement in the brown eyes into which he looked. "Sandy Merrill, you have been tried before this council of war on the charge of a serious offense against the scouts here assembled, and have been found guilty. Now, listen to your sen-

tence." ("Oh, gee!" thought Sandy.) "You have come uninvited to this island, which is the habitation of the mighty warriors of the past. They are the brothers of the scouts, and they will carry out your sentence, which is this: You will be flayed alive, and boiled in an iron cauldron. I now call upon the spirits of the mighty, whose dwelling place is the happy hunting grounds, to come and perform the deed."

Sandy's eyes fairly popped out of his head at what followed. From the woods behind him there glided noiselessly a dozen painted and half naked savages. It was small comfort that the skin under the grotesque daubs of paint was white, or that some of them looked strangely like old acquaintances. They were a hideous looking crew, armed with hatchets, knives and clubs, and the way in which they were painted made many an old warrior in the island turn over in his grave.

Sandy's two guards fell away and left him in their midst. Two of them proceeded to relieve him of his clothes, while others quickly and silently laid birchbark and brushwood for a fire. On top of this was placed with great care a huge iron pot filled with water. It all looked tremendously real, and Sandy blinked to make sure he was not dreaming. He would not for the world have had them think that he cared, and he bore himself with supreme indifference, even when with ungentle hands they dropped him splashing into the pot.

They placed the matches and birchbark ready for

lighting, and then proceeded with frightful howls and yells to execute a war-dance around the victim, the scouts standing back, silent witnesses of the scene. To Sandy, jammed down into a pot of cold water, the situation was to say the least, an uncomfortable one, though if appearances and threats counted for anything, the water would soon be hot enough.

He watched the painted savages circle round and round in their unearthly dance until he grew dizzy, and he wondered what would happen next. Then suddenly something did happen. So unlooked for was it, that the whole assemblage was stunned into inactivity for an instant. Out from the woods like veritable whirlwinds, there flew two figures, scattering dust and gravel around them, and into everybody's faces as they went. Sandy felt himself jerked from the pot, and before he knew it, was flying down the hill to the water at breakneck speed, someone holding his arm all the while.

It was all a jumble, the cries of the pursuers in hot chase, the getting into the boat, and the pulling out into deep water, and to safety.

It was Norman Hallock and Whitey who had been watching the scene from a sheltered nook and had planned the unique rescue. They had not expected it to be so easy, but it was the suddenness of the onslaught, together with the dust thrown into their faces which took the scouts off their feet, and gave the rescuers the start.

They were jubilant, but Sandy felt that there was still something to be desired before his cup of happi-

ness was full. Every stitch of his clothing was in the hands of the enemy, and his companions had nothing to spare. The *Silver Spray* was hovering about in the far distance, and at first it was doubtful whether she would come back to pick them up. At last, however, she swung around and headed for them, and in a little while, amid much cheering and a thousand eager questions, they climbed aboard. Skin Lightwood promptly bestowed his coat sweater upon Sandy, and thus arrayed he told the story of his adventures and timely rescue. Everyone was in high good humor over the day's adventures, but it soon became evident that relations between the Admiral and the boys were strained.

He was sulky and moody, and did not speak except to give necessary orders, which were obeyed with ill-concealed contempt. The rest of the time, he looked gloomily out over the waters, taking no part in the chatter and laughter around him.

"What do you think?" confided Barney, when he got a chance to speak to Sandy. "That crazy duffer wanted to go home and leave you fellows behind."

"He did?"

"Yes, sir, and because we wouldn't, he's sore. The fellows are all disgusted."

"Gee! he's the limit, I must say."

"He's dirty," declared Barney, summing up in a word the general verdict of the Admiral's spirit.

In the meanwhile the scouts had manned the war-canoes and started for home. They bent to their

paddles in a business-like manner, not deigning to cast a glance in the direction of the sailboat. They evidently were in a hurry to get to camp, and this suggested a race, which for a time was quite exciting.

The paddlers disdainfully kept their eyes in front and completely ignored the doubtful compliments shouted to them across the water by the younger fry.

The worst of it was that they were soon seen to be gaining on the sailboat. The wind had fallen, and before half the distance was passed they had shot ahead, leaving the *Silver Spray* to creep after them in leisurely fashion, which was most exasperating under the circumstances. When they had disappeared around the point into the bay, there was much speculation as to what their next move would be; and not until the *Silver Spray* came in sight of the wharf was suspense put to flight. They stood, a solid phalanx, armed with paddles, grimly waiting to pay off old scores to the full.

The whole camp fleet seemed to have chosen the same moment for coming into the bay. The launch with the Chief and the Lady of the Bungalow aboard had just tied up to the wharf, besides half a dozen other boats.

The party on the sailboat was eager for the fray, and before the anchor was well cast, the water around the wharf was boiling with a struggling mass of boyhood. No one of either side escaped a thorough ducking: as soon as one felt that he had had enough, and crawled out, someone pulled him back

in again. The Chief and others, who knew nothing of the proceedings of the afternoon, looked in laughing astonishment at the fervor of the fight.

At last when everyone had had enough, and felt in charity with his neighbors once more, the Admiral, who had received a little the worst of it, jumped on to the wharf, white with rage. One shoe and stocking had disappeared in the water; his gray shirt was hanging over his trousers, while the water ran down in streams. He started to tell the scouts what he thought of them, when one of his own party shouted: "Pitch him in," and in an instant everybody was back in the water again, "handing it to" the luckless Admiral, as a mark of their disapproval towards a man who had done an ignoble act.

Both sides were unanimous in declaring that they had not had such fun since they came to camp; but the next morning, after a heart to heart talk with the Chief, the Admiral packed up and went home. He was a misfit, and knew it, and now even the youngest boy knew it. He had utterly failed to grasp the spirit of the camp, and all that the camp stood for. Ambition for self had been uppermost, and he was going home a failure.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON THE TRAIL

A HALF dozen stay-at-homes stood on the wharf and waved a parting salute, as the camp fleet started gayly on its way to Washago, the first stage of the annual Muskoka trip. Not only was every boat requisitioned, but almost everyone in camp was there.

The *Silver Spray* was fairly spilling over with jubilant youngsters, and the three war-canoes had full crews. The launch chug-chugged along with the Chief, the Lady of the Bungalow and little Couchie on board, while the little dinghy sailed jauntily off on its own tack, with a crew of four seasoned sailors.

Moreover, a team of strong farm horses, and a hay-rack piled high with blankets and outfit, had driven out from camp a little after noon with Bruce Armstrong, a School of Science man and scoutmaster, as teamster.

Alexander, with his two aides, "Goo Goo" and "Shorty," was on board the *Silver Spray* to oversee the commissary department; but each boy was supplied with a little frying pan, a bowl and a spoon, with which he was supposed to cook and eat his food. These three articles dangled from his belt and added much to the picturesqueness, if not the tidiness, of the party.

Washago was a small village at the northern end of Lake Couchiching, where it emptied into the river Severn, on its way to Georgian Bay. The natives had grown accustomed to seeing the camp going through once a year, but were scarcely prepared for the invasion almost a hundred strong, which swooped down on them that evening at dusk. Immediately the town sat up and began to take stock of its saleable merchandise. The presiding genius of the one grocery tried not to look too elated as she perspiringly trotted back and forth with canned goods, biscuits, bottles of soda water and candy; the village bakery fired up for an all night session, and the owners of hens adjured them to work overtime, at the first streak of daylight. Such an opportunity came but once a year.

Supper was an informal affair, and meant eating out of the hand in the middle of the street, with half the population of the village looking on. Sleeping accommodations were found in the "town hall," which had not been swept or aired since the various functions of the social whirl, the winter before: most of the boys preferred the street. Little Couchie and her mother spent the night with the baker's family. The last to roll himself in his blanket was Bruce Armstrong, and he was supperless. Like a faithful teamster, he had sought first the comfort of his horses, and when he came back the hungry horde had eaten the last crumb of the last loaf in town.

In the morning the camp was early astir. Alexander built a fire in front of the "town hall," and

extricating a couple of boilers from the hay rack, proceeded to get ready for breakfast. In one of the boilers he cooked oatmeal, and in the other boiled water for tea. All along the street little fires were lighted, and with bowls and frying pans, the boys lined up for their rations. Griswold and Jerry Walker were slicing ham and as they filed past, each boy received a slice, and an egg to cook. Alexander industriously stirred the oatmeal with a fence rail, while an assistant ladled out generous portions into the waiting bowls.

Over a little fire which they shared together Sandy and Barney essayed their first cooking. To fry the ham was not so hard, but how to manipulate the egg was the question. It jumbled up in spite of them, while the ham was burned on one side and half cooked on the other.

They were not hard to please, however. What boy would be on a glorious morning like this, when he was on tramp and as free as any gipsy that lived? It was not every day that a fellow could eat ham and eggs that he had cooked himself, and oatmeal porridge stirred with a fence rail, while the entire population of a village looked on.

The wheels of progress stopped in Washago that morning. Not a washboard or smoothing iron was in use, and preserving kettles and workbaskets were relegated to their respective shelves. It was only when the last straggler had disappeared from view along the dusty road, that the villagers turned back to their duties with a "Now what do you know about

that?" expression of countenance. Nothing like it would happen again until this time next year.

It was a notable procession that stretched out along the white road that day, toiling up and down the interminable Muskoka hills, stopping to feed on the berries that hung so invitingly by the wayside, resting at full length for a moment under the cool shadow of some overspreading maple or elm; up and on again past the rock on which some roadside evangelist had inscribed in suggestively flaming characters, "After this the judgment"; past the primitive fields outlined with stump fences, and the fields from which the stumps had not yet been extracted; and lingering fascinated on the bridge to gaze down at the waters of the Black River as they came tumbling over boulders and fallen logs on their way out of the canyon-like depths of the green forest.

Little Couchie, seated on her father's shoulder, or on that of some other stalwart member of the party, gurgled and crowed happily along. True daughter of the regiment that she was, she lived up to the best sporting traditions of the club, and would have scorned to whimper. When she grew sleepy, her mother took her into the hay rack, and together they rode along in approved gipsy fashion.

Their pace was so leisurely and so much time was consumed in cooking dinner on the rocks by the roadside, that it was well on towards evening when they came in sight of Lake Koshee where they were to camp for the night. As they turned from the road through the farm yard to the shores of the lake,

Sandy looked in surprise on the wildness of the scene before him.

Koshee was not a beautiful lake; its shores were flat and its waters dark. The whole region had been fire swept again and again; the bare white trunks of towering pines standing here and there through the low second growth, like silent ghosts of vanished forests.

There were two or three new, unpainted summer cottages straggling along the shore not far from the farm house, and their presence seemed rather to accentuate the loneliness of the scene. Compared with the beauty of Lake Couchiching, it was desolation itself, but somehow as Sandy viewed it in the light of the setting sun, he was gripped with the charm of it all. Hugh Griswold caught the look in his face and putting an arm around his shoulders, stood beside him silently. There was no need for words. Almost anyone can appreciate beautiful scenery; but only the born wilderness lover knows the thrill and the magic of a lonely wind-swept lake at sunset. These two were akin and understood each other: the call of the wild, together with devotion to a great cause, had already led one far afield, and was to have no small influence on the life of the other.

They stood on a shelf of rock which extended back from the shore for seventy-five or a hundred feet, and were not left long to meditation, for the campers were arriving thick and fast.

Soon the wagon hove in sight, and was eagerly welcomed. Everybody was ravenously hungry, and

the long stretch of rocky shore was soon transformed into a very bee-hive of activity. Half a hundred scout-fires were soon alight, and in an incredibly short time Alexander had a boiler full of pancake batter ready for distribution. There were many flat stones lying about and they afforded great scope for individuality in fire building. Under Griswold's direction Sandy and Barney built a neat little range under the lee of the rock, with a discarded baking-powder tin, opened at both ends, for a chimney.

It was a great success, and they helped Skin Lightwood and little Baggs make one like it when they had finished.

The next thing was to line up with bowls and frying pans for pancake batter and lard to fry it in. This accomplished, the real business of the evening was begun. The experience of the youthful cooks ranged all the way from comedy to tragedy, usually partaking a little of both.

Barney stood helplessly looking down at the fire, with a bowlful of batter in one hand, and a pan of grease in the other.

"Gee, it'd be easier to drink it," he sighed dolefully. "How's a fellow going to cook all this in that little pan, I'd like to know, and where am I going to keep the grease while I'm frying it?"

"Never mind, sonny, you just watch your uncle," comforted Skin Lightwood, whose fire was close by.

"Well, hurry up then, for I'm starved," urged Barney, and sat down to watch operations, Griswold and Sandy not having returned yet.

"All right. Now first thing you've got to get's a dish for your grease and here's the identical thing," remarked Skin, picking up a small flat stone and transferring to it the lard from the frying pan.

"Ugh, that's dirty," objected Barney feebly.

"Aw, g'wan. What d'ye think we're running here? A twenty dollar a day joint? If there's any dirt there, it's good clean dirt and don't you forget it."

"Oh, fire ahead, and don't chin so much, I want to see how you do it since you're so smart."

"Sure, if you'll just quit your butting in. This is a domestic science lesson and you've got to take it serious. It ain't respectful to be chewing the rag with your teacher. You get your pan blazing hot like this, with lots of grease in, and then you dump in your batter this way. It's as easy as——. Oh—gee!"

Skin attacked the burning contents of the pan with his spoon, stirring it vigorously until it rolled itself into a half raw, half scorched ball, which he contemplated with crestfallen countenance.

"Well, I'll be—jiggered!" he ejaculated, when all hope was gone.

Barney frowned; he was far too hungry to see any humor in the situation.

"Say, of all the bum teachers I ever got hooked up with, you're the worst," he remarked disdainfully and returned to his own fire, where Griswold and Sandy had just begun their cooking.

Under Griswold's supervision things went better.

He was an experienced camper and knew how to smooth away all difficulties. Soon they were all "flopping" pan cakes and a merry time they had of it. If one flopped into the sand instead of back into the frying pan, it was all the more fun.

It was a beautiful scene that the cottagers watched that night from their piazzas, as the dusk deepened into darkness over Lake Koshee. Half a hundred fires stretched along the rocky shore, with a hundred forms busily engaged in the joyful task of supper; some half screened by the darkness, their faces showing in the bright firelight, and others standing silhouetted against the light. By and by the smaller fires died down and a larger fire was lighted, around which an ever widening circle gathered. Then over the waters there floated clear and strong and joyous the enthusiastic chorus of a popular song. The cottagers could stand it no longer, but arose in a body saying, "We will go and see this strange thing which has come to pass."

They gathered, an interested group outside the charmed circle, and remained until the last word had been said, the last song sung, and everybody ordered to turn in for the night. Song after song was poured forth with all the fervor and vim of youth, and everyone who had a "stunt" of any kind was forced out to perform it.

Alexander sang "Mona," and was applauded as rapturously as if he had never sung it before. Jack Whitby, Norman Hallock, Skin Lightwood and many others gave of their best. Hugh Griswold told a

breezy story of the west, and then the Chief called on a new boy, Alfred Blake, to sing. He had only been in camp three days, and few knew that he was fast becoming known as the sweetest boy singer in Toronto. They saw only a shrinking, pale-faced little chap, with little experience in the athletic games in which they excelled, but when he stood there, the ruddy firelight lending a glow to his cheek and a new brightness to his eye, and with a perfect self-possession that few of the others had attained to began to sing, they sat up and listened.

The song itself was one to stir the very heart of a boy, and rendered as it was so wonderfully in the clear appealing voice with the fitful glow of the campfire lighting up the face of the singer, it was one never to be forgotten.

“ They come when trumpets are calling,
When danger threatens England and there’s fighting to be done,

They come where trumpets are calling,
To learn to march and shoot, and starve, and die
by the gun!

Boys from the east and boys from the west,
Some of the worst boys, and some of the best,
Roughs of boys that bullied and fought,
Boys that mothers have loved and taught,
Learning to be heroes and gentlemen.

“ The boys that we make into soldiers
Are frank and strong, and bold, and true, and
merry and bright,

The boys that we make into soldiers,
They are grim and stern and fierce when full of the
 lust of fight.

Starving silently in the 'leaguered town,
Dying gayly before the flag comes down,
Always ready to help a friend,
Never a fear for their latter end,
That's the sort of stuff for heroes."

When the song was done and the roar of applause had died away, a hush fell upon the circle. After the thrill and the pathos of it, to return to the shouts and laughter of a few moments ago, was impossible. The Chief, like a good leader, knew the psychological moment for a story when he came to it.

The suggestion was greeted with enthusiasm. After all the Chief was the Chief, and there was nobody else quite like him: the very name they knew him by was a token of the grip he had on their love and loyalty.

He had made the camp and the club, and was the personal friend of every boy connected with them. In the club with its hundreds of members, he was the hero of every new boy. It was a joy to be near him because he was the center of every activity and his fertile brain worked overtime evolving new plans for competition and achievement. They gave him wholehearted attention, as seated on the ground, he told this story:

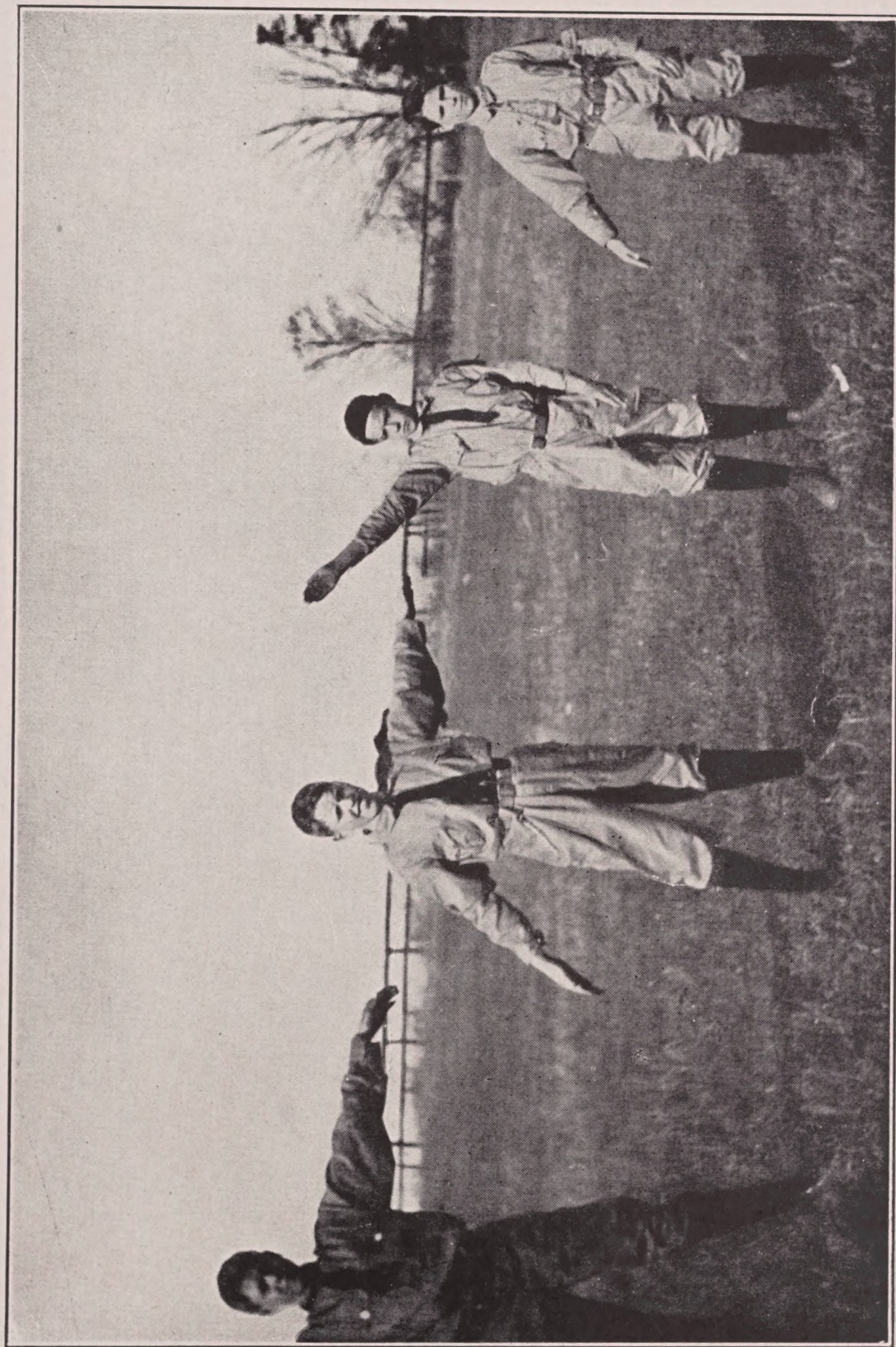
"Away back in the dim ages of the past, several

hundred years before the time of St. Patrick, there lived in Ireland a bright lad named Connell McConnell. Since ever he could remember he had been fired with ambition to be a famous man. He was a great hunter, and in every kind of outdoor life he easily led all the other boys in his community. He was big and strong, and so full of the joy of living that everybody loved him. As he grew up he became such a splendid fighter that he never knew defeat. While he was still a young man, Ireland was attacked by a foreign foe. The natives made a brave stand, but the enemy overran the country in vast numbers, and had superior knowledge of warfare. The island was soon subdued, and her chief men became captives. The conquerors, as their custom was when they had subdued a country, proceeded to choose the very flower of the manhood of the land to take back and present to their king.

“They did this by a process of elimination. Their chief men had the prisoners brought before them and examined as to their ability and fitness to be soldiers.

“Only the tallest and strongest were selected, and among the hundred chosen, was Connell McConnell. A week later the second test was made. They were given feats of courage and daring, and tried as to their ability to use the crude weapons of the times. Again they underwent a personal examination as to physical fitness, and ten men were selected, of which Connell McConnell was one.

This little group of ten men were the greatest athletes, the strongest and the most courageous, be-



THE SIGNAL CORPS

sides being the most perfect physically in all Ireland.

“They were given one week to prepare themselves for a final test. Great interest and enthusiasm was displayed by the leaders of the invading army; the thing they loved and adored above all else was a splendid type of physical manhood; and these ten men were given every attention that the great athletes of their own country received. The soldiers made wagers with one another, and thought of little else but about who should be the winner.

“At last the day came, and to the satisfaction of the great majority, Connell McConnell was pronounced the finest man in all Ireland, and he it was who was taken back and presented to the king.

“In Ireland he was loved and revered as a hero, and the people always looked for him to come back and take his place as their leader and deliverer; and in the strange land to which he was taken, his one great ambition was to return to his own country and lead the warriors to victory.

“When the king looked upon the splendid looking young man who was brought before him, he fell in love with him: never had such a specimen come from any country. With his brilliant wit and his infectious good nature, he won hearts on every side, and the king gave him the freedom of the country, first placing him under oath never to leave it and never to carry a weapon.

“A year later the army returned again from another invasion in which they had been conquerors;

the king was so pleased that he decided to commemorate the occasion by allowing Connell McConnell to take a journey to a distant land. He provided him with funds, and told him how to take his journey, and just as he was leaving his presence, presented him with a sword, first requiring of him an oath that he would never use it except in self-defense. Connell McConnell took the oath, and leaving the king's presence, set his face towards a land in the east. After many days he landed at a sea-port town in a far country, and from there made his journey to a great city he had heard a great deal about. He reached it one beautiful morning in spring. The air had been cold the night before, but now the sun was shining and as he drank in the clear air, he felt like doing great deeds.

"The city was set about with hills, and a massive wall with many gates surrounded it. As Connell McConnell approached it, he was struck with its glittering temple and palaces; but more than all, as he drew nearer he was impressed with a strangeness in the atmosphere; it was as though something terrible was impending. He felt a vague unrest and anxiety, and laid his hand upon his sword to reassure himself.

"As he entered the nearest gate he saw a great tumult. Crowds of people were coming his way, the faces of many gleaming with hatred. In the throng he saw priests and soldiers, citizens and women: many of the latter were weeping. 'What was the meaning of it all?' he asked a maid, and she said in

a frightened whisper that they were going to crucify a man.

“ ‘Why, what has he done?’ ”

“ ‘Oh, I don’t know,’ she answered, weeping. ‘I only know he was a great doctor, for he cured my father who had been sick for years, and he did it free, and was so kind and good to everybody.’ ”

“Connell was interested, and he pushed his way through the crowd until at last he got a glimpse of the condemned man. He was bending under the weight of a heavy cross he was carrying, and the crowd jeered and laughed as he stumbled and fell. When he tried to rise, a man gave him a rude push. All Connell McConnell’s sympathies and sense of justice were stirred for the condemned man. Instinctively he reached for his sword, and he was about to pierce the man through when he thought of his oath to the king. He must not break it.

“He followed the throng outside the city gate, and saw the soldiers crucify the man with two others. He watched the soldiers casting lots for the garments of the man, and when the crowd dispersed, he stood and looked at him as he hung on the cross. Many thoughts were going through the heart of Connell McConnell at that time. Never had he seen a man like this; and when at last a soldier came and pierced the side of the crucified one with his spear, Connell rushed at him with his drawn sword. Then once more he remembered his oath to the king, and in an agony he dropped on his knees at the foot of the cross. The man was dead, but from his side the

blood trickled down and a huge drop fell on the forehead of Connell McConnell. From that instant he was a changed man. The desire to be a great warrior and to lead the military forces of Ireland to victory gave way to a great love for humanity, and a desire to live and die for the man on the cross. He went forth to do and to dare, and suffer in a new cause, his heart full of peace and joy.

“Thirty years later the chief men of Ireland were assembled in a huge banqueting hall. Once a year, ever since Connell McConnell left the country, they had met there. One chair at the head of the table was always left vacant, for all Ireland still hoped that some day he would come back and take his place as their leader.

“That evening they had just risen from their seats to drink their annual toast to the absent one, when the door opened and an old man, with flowing white hair and beard, entered. His step was faltering and his form bent, but every man present recognized him as Connell McConnell. They crowded around him with warm handclasps and joyous words of welcome. He was old and shabby, but he was Connell McConnell still.

“They were eager to hear the story of his adventures, of the strange lands he had visited, and of the great deeds of prowess he had done.

“Then Connell McConnell stood and told first of the gay capital, and the favors bestowed upon him by the king. Then as though it had happened but yesterday, he told the story of the man upon the cross,

and of all that his death meant to him and to the world.

“They listened spellbound as, his face shining and his eyes alight with an inner fire, he recounted the story of the cross and told them that the man was alive again, and that his own life had been changed and filled with peace and happiness, all through acquaintance with him. He had left the life and ambition of the warrior to serve this new master, and was devoting himself to helping the sick and distressed, and leading people to leave a life of sin for one of service.

“When he had finished there was silence in the banqueting hall. Then the bravest soldier among them arose, and holding aloft his drinking cup cried in stirring tones, ‘I hereby pledge myself to join Connell McConnell in the service of his new master.’ The others arose as one man and solemnly pledged the same. Thus it was that Connell McConnell brought Christianity to Ireland long centuries before the days of St. Patrick.”

The campfire had burned low and it was time to turn in for the night. As the boys rolled themselves in their blankets, the story of Connell McConnell followed them and mingled with their dreams, always with the insistent feeling that to be a follower of Connell McConnell’s Master would be a wonderful and a courageous thing.

In the morning they were up and off on the long hot walk to Gravenhurst where they were to catch the boat for Port Carling. The next day after

camping at Port Carling, they were to spend going around the three lakes in the steamer *Sagamo*. It was this prospect which made the weary walk less tiresome, and made them sing along the road in spite of the burning heat of the sun.

CHAPTER XIX

CAMP COUCHICHING AS CUPID

THE day appointed for the boys to go around the lakes was one of rare beauty. And in all the world there was no fairer spot than the Muskoka lakes region. In a thousand charming nooks on land, and in the innumerable craft on the transparent waters, people were getting all the joy possible out of a summer holiday. The angler, the lover of solitude, the young and socially inclined—each was getting that which his heart craved.

The Rev. Angus McWhirter was an exception, for he was not quite sure whether he was happy or not. He did know that he had been here for five ridiculously short weeks, and that each day had seen him more deeply in love with Margaret Dwight. Never before in his thirty-three years of life had he regarded any woman with a stronger sentiment than that of warm personal friendship. Ever since he had taken the pastorate of the prosperous city church, he had been the despair of the matchmakers. They declared him to be slow, and blind to his dazzling opportunities. All of which was probably true, for he never dreamed of the trouble they were taking on his behalf, and went on his untrammelled way as pastor and friend.

He had known Miss Dwight slightly for some months, and had admired her beauty and charm; but only since coming to this delightful spot on Lake Rosseau, where he had been thrown constantly into her society, had he found that she was the one woman in all the world to him.

The trouble was, that he did not know whether she looked upon him with any more favor than she did on any one of half a dozen other admirers. Sometimes he dared to hope. Once, for a brief intoxicating moment, they had looked into each other's eyes and he had been deliriously sure.

Alas! that moment was short-lived, for immediately she had smiled at him mockingly, and had shown her preference for somebody else. To-morrow he was going back to his church and his people, and the words which haunted his dreams by night and burned on his lips by day, still remained unspoken; and what was more, he knew that he would not have the courage to say them before going. He had obtained her consent to spend the day with him going around the lake in the steamer *Sagamo*, and that was bliss in itself. As to declaring his love, though his heart leaped at the thought if it, he was a canny Scot, with nothing precipitate or rash in his make-up, and he determined to wait.

Margaret Dwight was as beautiful in character as she was to look upon, and her winning personality won her many admirers. If the Reverend Angus was slow in pressing his suit, there were others who

were not so dilatory; and if courage and assurance counted for anything, he was doomed to defeat.

With her married sister and twin nieces, she was staying at the same summer hotel. The sister was more or less of an invalid, and the care of the twins, aged ten, fell largely on Margaret. They were not ordinary children, but mischief-loving sprites, whose pranks were the talk of the colony.

They were pretty children and general favorites, but with such a genius for getting into mischief, that it was a dull day when there was not some escapade of theirs for the rocking-chair brigade to talk over on the piazza.

"Let us ask Aunt Margaret to take us over to Price's Point to-day," suggested Dorothy that morning. "There is to be a picnic over there and we can go in the launch. A lot of the girls are going."

"Aunt Margaret can't come," said Florence promptly.

"How do you know?"

"I heard mother tell father that she was going on the *Sagamo* with Mr. McWhirter."

"She shan't; I'll tell her not to."

"That won't do a bit of good," said Florence, shaking her fair curls. "There's worse than that, too."

"What?"

"Mother said to father that she shouldn't wonder if those two made a match of it yet."

"Oh! that's horrid."

"Yes, that is what I say, but I think it would be

just splendid if we had a real big wedding at our house."

"Wouldn't it?" cried Dorothy, taking fire. "Think of all the fine clothes, and the cake and ice cream and stuff. It would be no end of fun. Then the rice throwing. I always wanted to throw rice at somebody."

"So did I, but mother says that nice people don't do it, so perhaps she wouldn't let us—— Oh, Dorothy, I've just thought of something. Don't let's wait. Let's throw it after them to-day."

"To-day?"

"Yes, you goose, when they're getting on the boat. It'll be lots of fun. Everybody will think they're just married."

Dorothy clapped her hands in delight. "Come on, let us tell some of the other boys and girls, and we'll give them a good shower," she cried, and they darted past the Rev. Angus McWhirter, their curls flying, and looking a perfect picture of childish innocence.

Promptly at eleven o'clock, the warning whistle of the *Sagamo* apprised the pleasure seekers that it was time to hasten down the long sloping hill from the hotel to the wharf. Mr. McWhirter possessed himself of Miss Dwight's coat, and neither of them thought it peculiar that they were accompanied by a specially large contingent of the younger fry, or noticed that each was trying to hide a little box or paper bag. It was a special trip of the big boat and few had known about it, so there were not many to get on when the gang-plank was thrown out.

At that moment a dozen boxes and bags were opened and out came a deluge of rice. Not a half-hearted little shower, but quarts of it in a white avalanche. Mr. McWhirter and Miss Dwight ran through it, over the gang-plank, before they realized that they were the happy recipients of these strenuous attentions.

Immediately the boat was on its way again, and the victims glanced confusedly back to where, among the group of amused hotel guests, a dozen gleeful youngsters were waving a fond farewell.

Miss Dwight was genuinely angry.

"What a perfectly stupid joke!" she exclaimed wrathfully. And for once in his life the Rev. Angus McWhirter was at a loss to put his thoughts into words.

Bewildered by the suddenness of the novel situation, Miss Dwight looked eagerly over the water, as though escape by that means was a matter to be considered, while Mr. McWhirter tried to still a foolish little song of joy that had suddenly sprung up in his heart.

"It was a silly joke," he remarked at last. "But then they are only children after all."

"They are children who need training, and I will see that they get it after this," sputtered Miss Dwight, as together they moved towards the stairs leading to the deck, little guessing what was awaiting them there.

Camp Couchiching was on board a hundred strong. This was the biggest day of their Muskoka trip, and

the boys were riding the topmost wave of fun and jollity. No incident was too slight to be made an excuse for a demonstration. At every stopping place waiting crowds were informed by means of songs and club yells, just who they were listening to, and return information was asked for. Special songs, with names interpolated, called the attention of the passengers and crew to any impressionable leader or older boy who showed a disposition to cultivate the acquaintance of the fair sex.

The incident of the rice throwing did not escape them, and was hailed with cries and howls of delight.

"A wedding party!" "A bride and groom!" "Gee, I'll be sorry for them before we're through with them!" were some of the comments heard as the boat steamed on its way again.

Skin Lightwood leaned over the taffrail and shouted to the group on the wharf:

"Tell us his name, quick!"

"McWhirter," came the prompt reply over the rapidly widening distance.

Skin made a reassuring gesture with his long arm.

"Don't you worry; we'll McWhirter him," he shouted, then turned to muster his forces.

Nowhere were boys to be found, who could think up and organize a plan of campaign as quickly and as thoroughly, as those trained at Camp Couchiching. By the time the unfortunate pair reached the top step leading to the deck, they faced a long aisle,

flanked on either side by wild and woolly looking individuals, clothed in khaki and gray flannel.

If they had been in an imaginative frame of mind they might have thought of the brave days of old, when swaggering buccaneers forced luckless strangers to walk the plank. They merely stood still in dumb astonishment. These bold pirates wore frying pans, dangling to their belts instead of cutlasses, and at the appearance of the victims they burst into song, the burden of the chorus being:

“High over Jericho
McWhirter’s got a wife.”

The two never could have told how they walked down that aisle. They only knew that at the end of it there were three deafening cheers for McWhirter, followed by three doubly enthusiastic ones for “Mrs. McWhirter.” The plot was certainly thickening, and as they looked around the crowded boat where they were the cynosure for all eyes, they realized that the only thing to do was to face it and make the best of it. They offered no explanation and made no protest, but smiled their recognition of the attention they were receiving.

“Gee, they’re good sports all right,” cried Skin, and added to the chorus as a tribute to the charms of the lady:

“High over Jericho
McWhirter’s wife’s a peach.”

They were taken at once into the good graces of the party, but not for an instant all day were they allowed to forget that they were supposed to be newly married. Attentions of every description were showered upon them, and they were not left to themselves a moment.

McWhirter's name was upon every lip. He was declared in song to be "A Jolly Good Fellow," and "Mrs. McWhirter" was pronounced "all right." If they moved to another part of the boat seventy-five or eighty boys trailed after them, and it was a great triumph of personal charm that the boys forgot that they were there as tormentors.

At Port Cockburn the camp party went ashore to eat dinner on the grassy slope of a hill, and the two victims escaped to the dining saloon, glad of even a short respite.

Even there, they were conscious of the curious glances of the waiters and of the other diners.

This was the fourth day out for the campers, and they looked rather the worse for wear as they sat on the hillside, contentedly munching salmon sandwiches and drinking tea from bowls, to which the dust of travel still clung; while guests from the near-by hotels came down to gaze and pity.

One old gentleman made them the subject of a sociological discourse, to the accompaniment of "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" and "How perfectly interesting!" from half a dozen ladies with work-bags and lorgnettes. He illustrated his points by indicating particular individuals with his walking stick.

Sandy was delighted to find himself singled out as an example of the benefits of fresh air on the children of the poor. And someone suggested that Jerry Walker might find work with a farmer in the neighborhood at twenty dollars a month. Not even Jerry's best friends could deny that he looked as though he needed it.

The ladies with the lorgnettes almost fainted when two young ragamuffins ran up the hill to meet one of the most fashionable of the hotel guests, hailing her as "mother."

When they returned to the boat, the search for excitement began with renewed vigor. Mr. McWhirter and Miss Dwight were lulled to a false security by the unusual serenity of the first half hour, and they began to hope that they had passed out of the public gaze. They were seated well back in the bow of the boat, and were beginning to take some interest in the magnificent scenery for which Lake Joseph is justly famous. Most of the boys were in another part of the boat, and things were really serene at last. Their relief was short-lived, for they soon became conscious of a renewed stir among the boys. It could not be—and yet—— Yes, they were once more forming an aisle, or more properly speaking, a hollow square in front of them. Other passengers were crowding around with looks of amused interest, and with an inward shudder though outwardly smiling, Margaret Dwight wondered what was coming next.

There was little time for speculation. First there

was the slightest perceptible humming of the wedding march from Lohengrin. It gradually grew in strength and volume until a "Wedding party" swept ostentatiously into view and took their places solemnly in the midst of the square.

The boys considered this the crowning achievement of the day. The "bride's" costume was a marvel. Little red-haired Jim Grant, the smallest boy in camp, had been decked out with a black cape for a skirt, a green mosquito netting waist, and a filmy white umbrella shawl for a veil. This latter reached to his feet and in his hand he carried a bouquet of white flowers.

Skin Lightwood was the tall bridegroom, and Ben Myer the officiating clergyman. The bridegroom looked sad, and the bride proud and happy. The ceremony was a pattern of brevity and the advice of the clergyman as to future conduct met with the approval of the audience.

When it was over the contracting parties promptly disappeared from the limelight, and "Mr. and Mrs. McWhirter" became the center of a hilarious circle of well-wishers. Every boy in the party fell into line, and as they passed the long-suffering couple, they shook hands, and offered congratulations. This was a function which occupied considerable time, for most of the boys fell in behind a second and even a third time, prolonging the agony.

An impromptu concert followed, during which Mr. McWhirter was called upon for a speech. It was a situation fraught with many dangers for him, but

he merely arose, tall and grave and commanding, and said solemnly:

"Gentlemen, I think you are all jealous," and sat down amid cheers of approval.

Before they knew it the *Sagamo* was steaming up to the wharf at the Royal Muskoka Hotel. Here Mr. McWhirter and Miss Dwight were to wait for a smaller steamer to take them to their destination, as the *Sagamo* made fewer stops on the return journey. The boys were truly sorry to see them go, for they had won their liking during a most unique and trying experience; and only the Chief had known all along the trick that had been played upon them.

The parting was as noisy and as vociferous as the reception had been; farewells and good-wishes being sung and shouted as long as the boat was within hearing. The last sound that came to them over the water was the hoarse voice of Skin Lightwood, as he leaned far over the taffrail waving his long arms and shouting, "Good-by, Mr. McWhirter! Good-by, Mrs. McWhirter."

Few persons left the boat at the Royal Muskoka, and only a few were down to meet it, and these quickly disappeared up the hill to the big hotel, around which centered all the human life of the Island.

A short distance away, two men were working on an upturned launch which had come to grief; and they cast only a casual glance at the steamer, for they were in a hurry to be on their way.

A rustic seat overlooked the water, and Mr. Mc-

Whirter and Miss Dwight seated themselves there to await their boat, feeling strangely at a loss for words. Margaret felt as though it would be a relief to be able to laugh over the adventure and she was impatient that something made it impossible for her to treat the matter with levity. With her hands clasped in her lap, she looked demurely out over the water, while the Reverend Angus regarded her, his whole being in a tumult. A robin in the tree overhead was hopping from branch to branch, and calling to its mate. There never was another robin like it; for Mr. McWhirter could have sworn that it called: "Mrs. McWhirter!" "Mrs. McWhirter!" Stranger than all, the tattooing of the hammer on the launch sang the same refrain: "Mrs. McWhirter!" "Mrs. McWhirter!"

He was thrilled with the sweet intimacy of it, and her nearness intoxicated him. With her face turned from him, she was intently watching the glittering white track left by the steamer, but the exquisite loveliness of her was as wine to his blood—the soft brown hair, which the sun was turning to burnished gold, the delicately rounded cheek and throat, the crisp white dress, and the dainty boot. There never was another like her. How graciously and sweetly she had borne herself through the unique experiences of the day. She was wonderful!

The launch was fixed, and the men started off, calling something unintelligible, but evidently friendly, as they went.

Before he knew it, his hand had closed over her

two, and he was murmuring, "Dearest, shall we make it all come true?"

For a moment longer she continued to watch the white track in the water, and then she turned to him, her face radiant with the light of love.

Then even the robin flew away.

After a little the Reverend Angus threw back his head and laughed joyously. "I am just wondering," he said, "if our next wedding trip will not lack something of spice and flavor without our friends of Camp Couchicing."

CHAPTER XX

THE STORM

WHEN the *Sagamo* reached the wharf and the boys had had supper there were still two hours of daylight, in which to reach Lake Koshee, or some other convenient camping spot, for the night.

Not a moment was lost in setting out and the boys did not dally along the way, for it was the return journey, and most of the zest of the trip was over. The Chief and his little family with a few others returned to camp by train and the uppermost thought in every mind was to cover the ground as quickly as possible.

This became imperative some time later, when black clouds overcast the sky, and low rumblings of thunder were heard in the distance. The leaders looked anxiously about for shelter, but this was no easy matter owing to the size of the party. They were traversing a lonely road, and night was falling quickly. There was not a human habitation in sight, only hills and woods and stump-dotted fields jumping out of the darkness at every vivid flash of lightning.

Griswold remembered that at the foot of the next long curving hill were two houses and a barn. Shouting words of encouragement to the party, he

hurried ahead with Sandy to make what arrangements he could.

Bruce Armstrong's task was the hardest of all, for the wagon was heavy, and the wheels sank deep into the sand as the horses toiled bravely up and down the long hills. As the darkness increased and the lightning flashes became more vivid, the wagon became the popular center to the timid ones of the party. On either side of the road in some places the dark forest closed in, impenetrable, mysterious and filled with nameless terrors, but not even the most chicken-hearted could feel afraid while near Bruce Armstrong. There was something so altogether human and capable in the sound of his voice as he expostulated with his horses by name, and encouraged them, or humored their individual peculiarities as he walked along beside them. Occasionally he diversified matters by cheerfully whistling a bar or two of "I'm afraid to go home in the dark."

At the foot of the hill Griswold and Sandy stopped at the first house to ask for the privilege of sleeping in the barn. The flashes of lightning which were momentarily becoming more vivid showed it to be but a small affair, and things did not look very promising.

The stout, round-faced woman who came to the door in answer to their knock, looked astonished at their request.

"Ninety boys and a team of horses," she repeated dazedly. "Mercy me! Who ever heard of such a thing! There ain't room in the barn for no such gang as that."

Griswold stood in the doorway, hat in hand, the light streaming on his boyish face, his manner full of deference and respect.

"Perhaps we might find a shed here somewhere, that would help out," he suggested politely.

"I don't know of any—, but let me think a minute——"

A jagged tine of lightning ripped and tore through the southern sky, and was followed by a deafening peal of thunder.

The woman shrank back. "Dear me, that's awful," she cried, "I wouldn't keep a dog outside in that storm. I'll tell you what I'll do. The house across the field is mine; I'm staying here with my sick daughter just now, and if you'll promise that everything will be left all right, I'll let you take half of them there; the rest can stay in the hay mow."

Griswold thanked her warmly, and shouldered the responsibility of seeing that the house and its belongings were respected.

Just as the rain began to come down in sheets and torrents, the last straggler was gathered in. It was a terrific storm: the rain came in floods, and the thunder cracked with sharp detonations, and rolling vibrations, after each blinding flash of lightning had zigzagged its way to the earth. The contingent in the barn snuggled down into the new hay and tried to shut their ears to the riot of the elements, while in the cottage, forty boys stretched themselves side by side on the bare floor like patrons of a New York Mulberry street lodging house, at five cents a spot.

Neither the storm nor the hardness of their bed kept them awake very long for it had been a most strenuous day and they were all tired. Very soon, everybody was sleeping soundly, while the storm spent itself and gradually passed away to the westward.

Sandy was a light sleeper, but even he did not awaken until the sun was streaming in through the half-closed shutters. Then he sat up with a start, suddenly wide awake. A sharp sound of some kind had awakened him. All around him the boys were fast asleep on the floor; only Skin Lightwood was missing. He listened, for a repetition of the sound, and it came in a moment—the report of a gun, not far from the house.

Quietly picking his way among the sleepers, he stepped to the door and went out. It was a brilliant, shimmering world that he looked upon. All the mist and dust of yesterday had been cleared away by the storm, and he blinked for a moment with the sudden brightness of it after the gloom of the darkened room.

The house stood in the middle of a field with neither garden or outbuilding to relieve its forlorn ugliness, a stump-fence dividing the field from the woods, a hundred yards to the rear. The cause of the noise was soon apparent, for Skin Lightwood, with a gun under his arm, was busy setting a tin can on top of a projection on the fence.

Sandy ran over to him. “Where did you get that gun?” he demanded.

Skin turned a delighted countenance. "Say, kid," he exclaimed joyfully, "I haven't had such fun since I had the measles, you just watch me."

"I won't do it, where did you get it, that's what I want to know?"

"Oh, keep your shirt on, I got it in the kitchen and a whole box of cartridges on the shelf beside it."

"But that wasn't yours, you lobster."

"Say, listen to me, if you'd a' been here a minute ago, you'd 'a split your sides. There was a big rooster on that fence, just flapping his wings, getting ready to crow, when I says to myself, "See here, Skin, if that guy William Tell could knock an apple of a fellow's cocoanut, it's up to you to shoot the tail off that old rooster!"

"Did you do it?" eagerly demanded Sandy, forgetting his scruples for the moment.

"Did I? Well, now you're talking. Look at this feather. It came off as clean as a whistle. "Oh, I didn't win three medals for nothing," replied Skin, picking up the feather and sticking it into his hat with picturesque effect.

"Don't you know that Mr. Griswold promised we shouldn't touch anything around here?"

"Nope, I didn't hear anything."

"Well, you hear me, and you've just got to stop it."

"Sure, I hear you, but I'm not going to stop. There's a little lake through the woods there, and I'm going duck shooting; want to come?"

"No, I don't. Aw, say, Skin, he decent, can't

you? You haven't any right with that gun or those cartridges, and you know it. You'll get Mr. Griswold into trouble: a promise is a promise."

"That's all right, kid, don't you worry. I didn't make any promise, and I'm not breaking any. Good-by—if you're not coming. I'll get a duck for breakfast."

As Sandy stood looking helplessly after Skin's retreating form, little Baggs hurried out to look for his missing chum, and catching sight of him, ran after him, heedless of Sandy's call to come back. The others were awake now, and preparations for a hasty breakfast were soon under way.

Griswold was angry when he heard of Skin's escapade. "The young scamp, he'll take the money for those cartridges over to Mrs. Clark, and apologize," he said with emphasis. "Lucky if he doesn't do some damage before he's through."

From time to time the sound of rifle shots down by the lake, gave evidence that Skin was alive at least. When the cartridges were all spent he returned, his face radiating satisfaction. It had been great fun, he declared, and worth the price even if he had to pay for it. Not even the bad five minutes he had with Griswold could take away from him the joy he had had, down by the lake. In common with most of the party his money was spent long ere this, but he managed to borrow sufficient to pay for the cartridges, and the incident was closed for the time.

It was a tired and dusty party that straggled into Washago, early that afternoon. The day had

turned out intensely hot, and Sandy thought he had never been quite so thirsty in all his life.

As he trudged along with Barney, he vainly tried to shut his ears to the scraps of conversation floating to him from the groups both behind and before.

"Lemonade, Ice cream, Water ice." They were words to conjure by. But alas! when a fellow is penniless, how tormenting they may become.

He was not alone in his poverty-stricken condition, however, for the boys who had spent their money first during the trip, had borrowed from the more provident, and now so far from being the opulent youths who had fattened the coffers of Washago, a few days before, they were reduced to the ignominy of accepting the one free thing the town afforded—water.

The act of passing the door of the little shop, where cooling drinks were sold, was a test of character. Some passed by with head erect and haughty mien; others slunk by with an air of personal injury, while a few dallied with temptation by pausing to count the bottles of "pop" on the grocery shelves.

Sandy was doing his best to ignore it all, when Barney electrified him by extricating a dime from his trousers pocket. He had saved it from his little store for such a moment as this, and it made them the nabobs of the party for the time being. After that Sandy regarded his chosen companion with a new respect. Such thrift was beyond his comprehension.

Down at the wharf they found the little fleet wait-

ing, and soon were being wafted homeward over the blue waters of Lake Couchiching. The much anticipated Muskoka trip, a thing to look back upon and talk about for months to come.

Before Sandy and Barney there was a solid week of work and fun, in camp, and then the most wonderful thing of all was to happen. They were going on a canoe trip with Hugh Griswold and Dad Farrington.

All their experiences in camp had been leading up to this; for only the physically fit and the fully trained, were permitted to go off into the wilds, even with the best of leaders. Swimming, life-saving, canoeing, first-aid, and half a dozen others were among the tests to be passed for this great privilege.

Sandy and Barney were not afraid. In the matter of progress they had far outstripped most of the others, and were quite unlike the pair who had looked about them so uncertainly that first morning of camp. They had gone in whole-heartedly to win, and so far had succeeded.

The next day after dinner, when the whole camp was assembled in the pavilion, the Chief stood with a letter in his hand, and with a sternness which few had ever seen in him before, announced that the communication was from a Mrs. Clark, who had given the boys shelter the night of the storm. It was addressed to the camp, and read as follows:

Dear Sir:

This is a few lines to lett you know that when the

boys that slep in mi hous went away i went in an look around. i lett you know that somebody had took my purse. i allways kep it in the crackt sugar bowl on the shelf beside the gun. It had five dollars in. Somebody also ett some of mi onions. i lett you know that i don't want the onions back, but i nede the money rite away the young gentleman was as fine a gentleman as i ever seen, but there was others and i doant want to menshun no names but they was too boald.

Yours respectfully,

MRS. CLARK.

The Chief paused and laid the letter on the table. Consternation was written upon every countenance, and involuntarily the boys glanced in the direction of Skin Lightwood, who was staring at the Chief, with eyes out of which for once, every spark of nonsense had fled. The odor of onions on his breath and Baggs', had been the standing joke of yesterday, and the incident of the gun was notorious. He had owned up to having rifled a small onion bed in the back field, but no one had thought much about it: Now things looked decidedly ugly.

"It is unnecessary to say that this is a grave charge, and one which closely concerns the honor of Camp Couchiching," said the Chief incisively. "It is a matter for the board of control to probe to the bottom. You all know the penalty: it is the restoration of the stolen money, and instant expulsion from camp. The board will meet immediately after

dinner, and every boy who was in the house that night, or who knows anything concerning the matter, will be required to attend."

The boys withdrew from the table in a constrained manner. No such blot as this had ever come upon the camp, and they could think of nothing else for the time being.

At the last bi-weekly election, Hugh Griswold had been elected President of the board of control, and much to his sorrow, it was his duty to try the case. The upstairs room in the pavilion where the board usually met was too small for an affair of this magnitude, and a retired spot by the lake was chosen. It was also decided to empanel a jury, and conduct the trial along strictly legal lines. As President of the board, Griswold naturally took the position of Judge; Ben Myer was appointed prosecuting attorney, and Jack Whitby, lawyer for the defense. It needed no preliminary examination to place Skin Lightwood in the dock as the accused. Public opinion swept him there perforce. It was no mock trial this, and everyone felt the seriousness of it. One of their own companions was on trial for his reputation and his honor, and the whole camp crowded around to hear how it would come out.

The twelve jurors were chosen, and then the trial began amid sharp shirmishes, between the opposing counsel, who took themselves with tremendous seriousness.

Witness after witness was called to testify to what they knew regarding the prisoner's doings on the oc-

casion in question. It was proved to the satisfaction of the court that no one had been near the shelf upon which the money was hidden, except the prisoner. The fact that he had already broken rules and committed depredations went against him.

Skin's face became more deadly serious and his mouth drooped in a hopeless way; while Baggs sat as near to him as he could, looking the picture of misery.

As the trial neared the end, and everyone realized the gravity of the situation, a hush fell upon them. Griswold's face was full of pain as he gave the charge to the jury. The attitude of judge to the accused was one entirely new to him, and it hurt him to have to pronounce sentence of expulsion and probable ostracism upon this boy, whose vagaries had been the delight and the despair of camp.

The few minutes that the jury was out was a time of breathless suspense.

No one felt like talking, as they sat or stood around in a semicircle and waited. Not a sound could be heard, but the chug-chug of a launch on the lake and the distant shunting of a freight train. Skin turned his face from his companions and looked steadily over the lake; then the jury came back.

The verdict was a foregone conclusion—"Guilty."

As the foreman pronounced the word, Baggs was on his feet. By common consent his testimony had not been called for. "Hits a lie," he cried, "Skin 'e haint guilty."

"Put him out!" cried someone in the crowd, but Baggs stood firm, his face white and his eyes flashing. He was stretched to his full absurd little height and for once seemed afraid of no one.

With a gesture Griswold silenced the murmurings of the crowd, and then said quietly, "Baggs, this will hardly do, you know; if you know anything to prove that the prisoner is not guilty, we will listen, if not, you must sit down."

"They says Skin's a thief and 'e haint."

"What do you know? Tell us."

"I know—, I know—"

"Come now, who took the purse if the prisoner did not?"

Baggs's half appealing glance swept the witnesses, the jury, and resting a moment on the prisoner came back to the judge.

"I took it," he said defiantly.

The astonishment was profound, but no one moved or spoke.

Skin regarded his admirer with open-mouthed amazement, and Griswold looked perplexed.

"Do you know what you are saying?" he asked.

"Yes I know. I took that purse and Skin 'e didn't do nothink."

"Where is the purse and the money? It must be sent back you know."

Baggs's face grew more deadly white, and he looked helplessly around. "I 'aven't got it," he faltered.

"What did you do with it?"

"I—, I got frightened—and I dropped it into the lake."

Griswold stood regarding him doubtfully, trying to read the meaning of this new development, when Windy de Forrest arose to the occasion.

"Your honor," he said briskly, "I move that we take up a collection and send the money to Mrs. Clark, and that we let the matter drop."

A murmur of approval greeted this proposal, and the motion was carried unanimously. The collection was taken on the spot and a great relief was felt, that the matter could be disposed of in this way. When it was over the boys dispersed. Baggs hastened away, not even waiting for Skin, who looked dazedly after him. The afternoon's programme was taken up, but no one took much interest in it. A shadow had fallen over the camp. Supper was a spiritless meal, and even baseball was not quite as absorbing or as exciting as usual.

When the first strain was over the boys began to feel more and more indignant with Baggs. He had always been an outsider, and though treated tolerantly, had been regarded as more or less of a servant, and a curiosity. It was too bad that through him a blot should come on the fair name of the camp.

He stayed in the kitchen more than was his wont, and did not follow Skin as usual. Griswold took him under his wing in a quiet way, letting him into games and things from which he otherwise would have been excluded, and cultivating his friendship in many ways.



A MORNING SAIL

This went on for two or three days, and then one evening, after supper, the Chief said: "I have an announcement to make in which you will all be deeply interested.

"I have had another communication from Mrs. Clark. This time it came by telephone; she was so anxious for me to get it that she walked four miles to the telephone."

The boys listened in breathless silence, wondering what new development was coming.

"The purse has been found," continued the Chief. "She had not put it into the cracked sugar-bowl after all, and she wishes to apologize to the camp for any unpleasantness the incident may have caused.

"You will understand that this fully absolves anyone in camp from any connection with this matter."

The announcement swept the camp clean off its feet, and when the Chief paused, an excited murmur arose. Every eye was turned to Baggs, who looked as though he was going to faint.

Then Jack Whitby sprang to the table and cried: "Three cheers for Baggs, the dead game sport!"

The demonstration that followed outdid anything that had been heard in that pavilion for many a long day. They were supposed not to approve of a lie, but even with that sin on his shoulders, little Baggs had risen to a height of loyal friendship of which they had never even dreamed.

Ben Myer slapped him approvingly on the back. "You're doing credit to your teachers at last, my boy," he cried.

"By being a good liar," flouted Windy de Forest from across the room.

"By being the best sport in camp," corrected Myer.

"That's all right," remarked the Chief dryly, "but don't anybody else try the game. It may not work so well the next time."

After that the days passed in quick succession. Hugh Griswold went to Toronto for a day or two before going on the canoe trip, and some of the boys in his tent were on a "hike" to Bass Lake. One night Sandy and Barney found themselves the only representatives of the tent in camp.

They decided that they would celebrate the occasion by capturing the honor pennant the next day. This was a distinction, when every member of a tent was present and working hard, but for two alone it was considered next to an impossibility, for everyone's marks counted. However they set to work with a will, and from early morning until the last signal for "lights out" at night they lived with one end in view—the honor of their tent. Table setting, tent inspection, promptness, deportment, efficiency in the games, all had their bearing on the final results, and when it was announced the next morning that they had won, it was considered a record feat for Camp Couchiching.

When Griswold and the others returned that day and found the honor flag flying over their tent, there was much rejoicing and many congratulations.

Then came the evening, when just as night was

settling down, they dipped their paddles into the lake and turning their faces northward, set off on the much-talked-of canoe-trip. Dad Farrington had been detained in Orillia, while purchasing supplies, and they were several hours later than they had anticipated, but no one was sorry. To Sandy, especially there was a charm and a novelty about starting off under the stars in the silence of the night. Everybody in his tent was there, besides several others, but he did not talk much.

In fact there was little to be heard, but the dip, dip of the paddles for some time after the four canoes shot out into the open lake.

Then the last touch was added when from the midst of a dim glow in the northern sky there shot upwards, a single shaft of light; then another and another, changing and spreading, and ebbing back again.

They were Canadian boys, and not unused to the elusive spectacle of the northern lights, but never had they seemed more beautiful than to-night. By their light they paddled on up the lake to a suitable camping spot, which Dad knew, and were soon sound asleep, wrapped in their blankets and dreaming of the long trail.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HAUNTED RAPIDS.

A FEW nights later they were seated around a blazing campfire, animatedly discussing the events of the day. Their canoes were already pointed homewards along the southern branch of the Muskoka River, the most strenuous and difficult part of the trip. All day long they had run rapids or toiled over rough portages in the burning heat. Now the difficulties were all forgotten in the joy of watching the burning logs and comparing notes as to the size and weight of the packs they had carried over the portages, and listening to accounts of the marvelous size of the fish that got away.

They had found the track of the red-deer, and heard by night the lone cry of the loon. They had pushed their way through bear-trails, and once on a silent lake they had met Mr. Bruin himself. He was swimming across the lake at its widest part, and paid no heed to their friendly greetings, other than by a sniff or two of apparent contempt. Once during the night while they were camping on that same lake, Sandy averred that he heard the mournful howl of a wolf. No one disputed his word but Barney, and he did not count as he was too sound asleep to hear it anyway.

Their camp was well chosen in a cleared spot at the end of a long portage, with the sound of the rapids in their ears and the pine woods all around them.

As they were talking they heard a crackling of the twigs underfoot, and immediately two men emerged from the gloom of the woods, into the circle of light cast by the fire.

"Good evenin'," said the older of the two, a grizzled one-eyed woodsman of sixty, looking around upon the circle. "Jim here seen yez on the other side of the last rapids, and we figgered that yez would be campin' here."

"Oh, good evening, come and sit down," cried half a dozen voices at once, with the easy comradeship of the wilderness places, as the boys hospitably made a place in the circle for the new comers.

"Don't care if I do; we're always glad to see strangers around these parts; come on, Jim."

Jim nodded at the circle with a sheepish grin, as he sat down. He was a raw boned youth, who seemed at a loss to know what to do with his hands and feet.

"You're as welcome as the flowers in May!" quoted Griswold poetically.

"Yes, we thought we'd set with yez fer a spell. It gits pretty lonesome here sometimes. Mebbe yez have heard of Andy Johnson?"

No one had, and the speaker looked disappointed.

"Well, if yez have, that's me. I ain't a blowin' but yez can ask them that knows, and they'll tell yez I'm the best guide and the best——" The speaker broke off suddenly, with a look of consternation in

his face. He had been searching diligently through his pockets while he talked.

"There, if that don't beat all, I'm clean out o' tobaccy," he exclaimed, while his one eye rested hopefully on Dad.

"Now that is a pity," said Dad regretfully, "because there isn't a bit of tobacco in the crowd."

Andy's look was one of pained incredulity, and again his eye swept the circle inquiringly.

"Gosh! if it ain't a Sunday School picnic," he ejaculated in awed tones.

Then everybody laughed and explained matters to their own satisfaction, if not to his. Shaking his head dolefully, he renewed his search and this time found the missing treasure.

"Mebbee you younguns is right," he remarked, as he proceeded to fill his pipe. "Come to think of it, I'm sure yez are, but it ain't my way, and what's more, I'm sure it never will be. Where do yez all come from, anyway?"

"From Toronto," replied half a dozen voices.

"From Toronto! Ye don't say. I was there once, ten year ago comin' October. Gosh, it's an awful place to spend money in. Say, d'ye know, I hadn't been there a week when slap-bang, went three dollars. Ye don't ketch me there agin as long as I live."

"It's worse than ever," remarked Dad gravely. "You could almost get rid of five dollars in a week now."

"I'll bet ye; my, but they're the grabbers! They won't get any o' mine though, I'll promise ye."

"I guess they got Andy roped in to playing on the races, and speckylatin' in minin' stocks," drawled Jim with a quiet smile.

"You know this region pretty well of course," said Griswold.

"I'd ought to, fer I been here since ever I can mind," replied Andy.

"Is the river as rough as this all the way down?"

"Pretty much. There's two or three rapids ye've got to look out fer. This un's the worst though. There's several been drowned in it. Ye see it don't look so treacherous till ye're right into it, and then mebbe it's too late."

Andy leaned forward and gazed thoughtfully into the fire while he smoked, and in the pause, the crackle of the burning logs, the sighing of the wind through the pine trees and the mellow roar of the rapids mingled like some wonderful symphony of God's great silent places.

Sandy broke the silence. "You say people have been drowned here?" he remarked inquiringly.

Andy removed his pipe and spat in the direction of the fire. Then laying it down carefully, he nodded towards the river. "There's somethin' queer about these here rapids," he said mysteriously. "They used to be ha'nted. Some says they is yet."

"Haunted rapids!" cried Griswold delightedly. "That sounds interesting! Tell us about it."

"Well, I never seen anything myself" began Andy

cautiously, "but I've hearn the old folks tell about it many's a time.

"It was in the days when the Injuns was hereabouts, not long after the white settlers first come in. The Injuns was a shiftless drinkin' lot, both men and women of 'em. They'd always drink if they got it, and they sure did act crazy when they had a little in 'em.

"One day two old squaws was up to the settlement and they got just enough to make 'em feel excited. They was comin' home, down the river, when a terrible storm come up. The two old ladies didn't notice it 'cause by this time they'd got tearin' mad at one another.

"They was screamin' and swearin' and ready to throw each other in, when they come to these here rapids. Well, sir, instead o' gittin' out and carryin' their canoe around like sensible people would, they started to run the rapids. All the time yellin' and cussin' like mad. Of course the canoe upsot. One got drowned and the other hung on to a rock till somebody pulled her off.

"Well, sir, the funny part of it was that after that, every time there was a storm, that old lady that was drowned, used to rise right up in the middle o' them there rapids, and scream and swear somethin' awful. The Injuns didn't like it. She'd been nothin' but a nuisance as long as she lived, and they natchelly thought she ought a' stayed dead, when she went and got herself drowned.

"Well, seein' they was Catholics, when they wasn't

heathen, they went to the priest to see if he couldn't do somethin' to lay the ghost. So the next time there was a storm, he come with some holy water and he sprinkled it on the water, just when that old squaw was doin' her very worst.

"The Injuns was tickled to death that they'd got rid of her and they went back to their tents or whatever they lived in, and they had a feast and a dance——"

"A ghost dance, I suppose," suggested Griswold.

"Yes, I guess so. Well, by dad; the very next storm, she was up and at it again, as brisk as ever. My, but they was a sorry lot of Injuns. The thing had got on to their nerves and they didn't know what to do. At last the old Chief said, She'd just *got* to be laid, that was all there was about it. He figured it out that the holy water didn't touch the right spot. He studied it all over in his head, how it could be got over to the middle o' them rapids, just at the right minute.

"At last he struck it, and the next storm, what d'ye s'pose they done? "

No one volunteered a guess.

"Well, they come to this very spot, and they had a shotgun and some shot. They soaked the shot in the holy water and when the old lady riz up, they slapped it into the gun and let her have it. That did the trick. She never riz up no more."

"Gee, I wish she would," sighed Barney enviously.

Andy had resumed his pipe and was deeply engrossed in making it go, with a coal he had picked

out of the fire between his fingers, and made no comment.

"Well, all I've got to say is, I'd just like to see her," remarked Sandy.

"I've hearn tell that she's been saw here since then," volunteered Jim obligingly.

"It feels like a storm," suggested Fat Wolcott in a hopeful tone.

"Speakin' about Injuns," said Andy, ignoring these side remarks, and laying aside his pipe once more, "they certainly was a measly lot about here; ye just had to keep yer eye on 'em all the time. They didn't get ahead o' me though, no sirree, bub. There was one fellow was up to their heathen tricks. One day I was out huntin' and comin' back, a young Injun got into my canoe with me. By accident I dropped my powder horn overboard, and the Injun offered to dive down after it. He went, and he stayed down so blamed long, that I got kind of uneasy. Says I, 'I'll go down and see what the trouble is.' So I dived down, and what do ye think?

"By dad, if that blamed redskin wasn't standin' at the bottom of the lake emptyin' my powder into his own horn."

This story brought forth a round of applause, the boys declaring it was the best yet.

"I don't believe no sich yarn," declared Jim emphatically. "Why, I've heard that story ever since I was a kid."

"Well, what if ye have? ye heard it about *me*," replied Andy unabashed.

"Don't you believe him; he's the biggest liar in Muskoka," said Jim in an aside to Sandy, who was sitting near him. Everybody heard, and they all laughed heartily.

The conversation became general after that; Sandy explained all about Camp Couchiching to Jim, who was greatly interested. He asked many questions, and in turn told something of his own life on the rocky Muskoka farm, and of his ambition to get away and see the great world for himself. He acted as guide to hunters in the fall, and their stories and conversation had made him long to get away, he said. He asked Sandy if he had seen the hunter's cabin, near their camping ground. Two men were staying in it now, but he thought they had been drinking and had gone up the river to the village.

Then, as was his custom since coming to Camp, Griswold read a chapter from Forbush's, "Boy's life of Christ." They were nearly through, and the portion for the evening was the story of the arch-traitor and the betrayal.

Jim listened spellbound, as to something very new and very real. He had heard the story before, but it had never concerned him; now told in all the vivid simplicity that boys love, it took on new meaning.

Twice he wiped the tears from his eyes, and when it was done, he said to Sandy, "I wish I had that story."

"Haven't you a Bible?" asked Sandy quickly.

Jim shook his head. "No, I never had one," he

said slowly. "Perhaps I can borrow one, I'd like to read that again."

"Hold on a minute," cried Sandy with a sudden impulse: going to his pack he opened it and came back with his own Bible. "You take this, I'm going home soon anyway," he said, and pressed it upon Jim.

The visitors took their leave, and the boys went to sleep on their beds of balsam boughs, the sound of rushing, white toothed waters sounding in their ears.

In the morning the sky was overcast and a chill had crept into the air.

Dark gray clouds in great masses moved across the sky and a strong wind whistled weirdly through the forest.

The white water roared angrily as it tumbled down in great reef-breaks and eddied hungrily around impeding rock fragments.

Things did not look very encouraging for a day's struggle with rapids and rough portages.

"We might as well wait here for it to pass over, as to be caught on the trail," decided Dad, as they discussed the matter while disposing of their breakfast of coffee, bread and bacon.

"Then I'm going to look for the hunter's cabin that Jim told me about," announced Sandy.

"Me too," volunteered Barney and Fat Wolcott in a breath.

"All right, come on this minute."

"Don't forget that it's your turn to wash the dishes," enjoined Dad cruelly.

"Bother the dishes then, let's make them wash themselves," exclaimed Sandy as he proceeded to gather them up. "We can stick them in the sand here in this sheltered spot, where the water will wash over them."

"I've always heard that it took a lazy man to be an inventor, now I'm sure of it," remarked Griswold, eyeing him critically.

"Well, you just watch now and see if these dishes won't be all clean by the time we need them again," beamed Sandy, well pleased with his bright discovery.

A brook now almost dried up made its way through the woods to the river. On the other side of this, on a rocky prominence, stood the hunter's cabin. From its door one could see far up the river, but close at hand things were hidden by the trees, and only the narrow gorge of the brook was visible.

The boys found it a weird lonely spot; the thick underbrush which grew up close about it waving in the wind, and the odor of the woods floating in the air.

The door was closed, but there was no padlock, and no sign or sound of life about.

Cautiously and half fearfully Sandy pushed the door open, and wonderingly the trio peered in. Evidently it had recently been occupied. A tea-pot half empty, stood on the stove and a piece of bacon hung from a hook in the ceiling.

The furniture consisted of a stove, a bench and a couple of bunks, running along the wall.

A gun stood in the corner, and articles of men's clothing were hanging on the wall.

"Phew! I wouldn't want to live there," exclaimed Barney, as they closed the door and turned away.

"They're the fellows that Jim told me about. He said they'd been drinking. They've only been here about a week and one of them has been sick," said Sandy.

"I wonder who they are," pondered Barney. "Anyway, we can come up here if it rains too hard. Come on, let's tell the fellows."

Sandy did not move nor answer; for his eyes were fixed on a moving object on the river above the rapids.

"A canoe!" he breathed, "and it's coming straight for the rapids!"

"Get out!" ejaculated Barney. "It can't be."

"It is; look, there are two men in it, and they're paddling straight on!"

"That's a fact; they must be crazy."

"I'm going down," cried Sandy, and dashed down the slope, followed by the other two. Yesterday they would not have feared for the safety of the canoe and its occupants, but unconsciously the talk at the campfire had impressed them with the danger of these rapids, at least.

Meanwhile the light bark with its two occupants was drawing perilously near the whirling current. The man in the stern was talking boisterously and singing occasional snatches of "Annie Laurie," while he recklessly plied his paddle. The other, with

pallid face and bloodshot eyes, stared straight ahead of him without uttering a word, and scarcely paddled at all. A half-gallon demijohn in the middle of the canoe told the whole story. They had been drinking and were taking no account of rapids or other dangers.

The man in the bow was the first to see, and with a startled exclamation, he called to his companion to back out of the dangerous current.

The only reply was a loud laugh and a drunken shout. It was too late anyway, for they were already caught in the swift water. The man at the stern had run these rapids before when the water was high, and with reasonable care was comparatively safe. It was lower now and each jagged rock had its menace. In a moment the canoe was bobbing up and down on the riot of tumbling waters. The man in the bow, fully alive to the danger, used his paddle intelligently, but he and his companion did not work together. The latter whooped and shouted like a madman, and in a frenzy of bravado tried to stand up in the canoe.

The result was inevitable, and while the startled group on the shore stood watching with bated breath, the canoe staggered, twisted round and overturned.

CHAPTER XXII

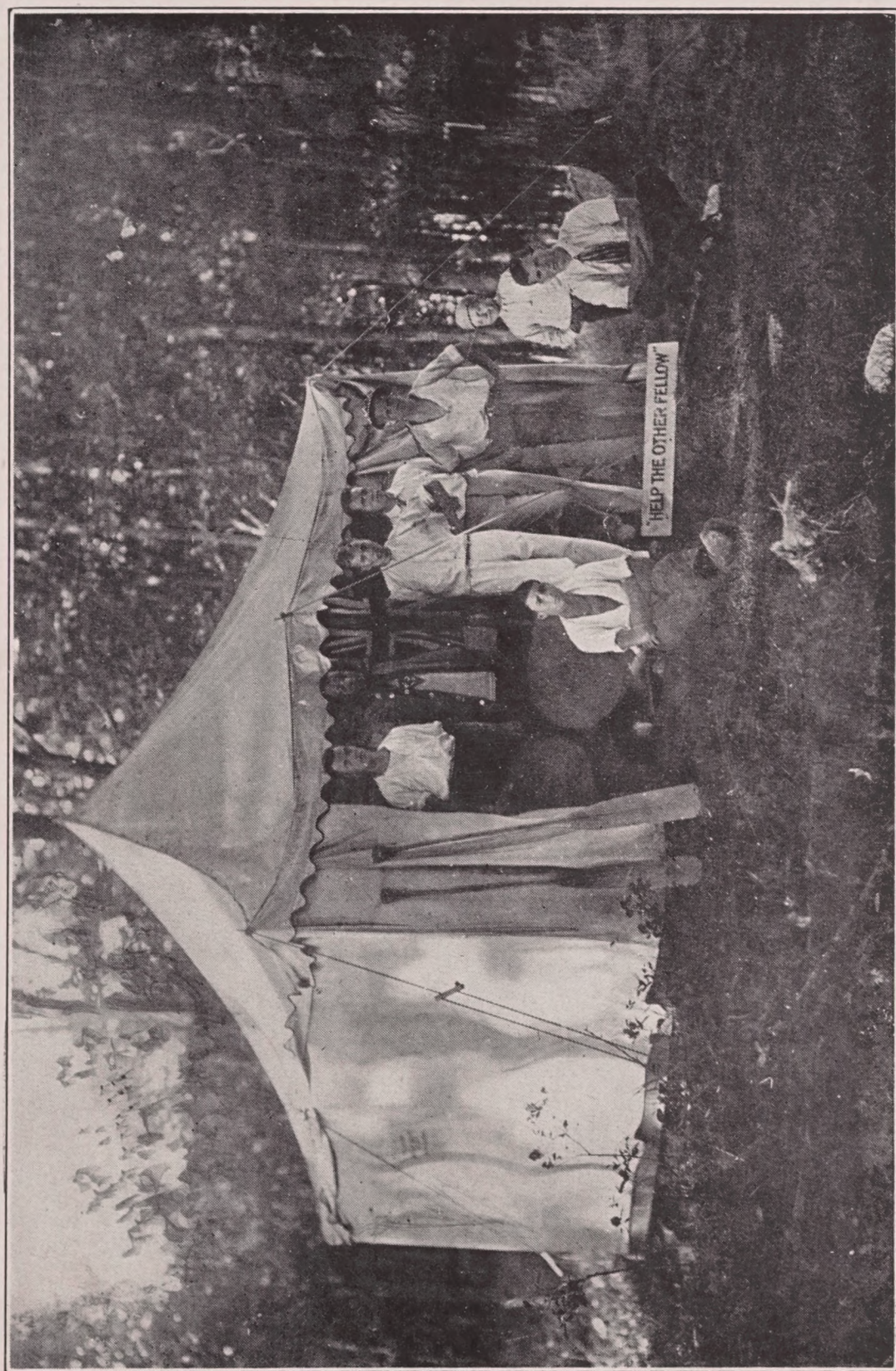
DONALD

IT was a wild scene for a morning in late August. The clouds were growing darker and the wind moaned through the tall pines and hemlocks in a weird sort of way.

A cry of horror rose from the watchers on the bank as they saw the canoe flutter and upset. They were so powerless to help, and it was a case where assistance must be immediate if at all. They saw one man throw his arm over a projecting rock and draw himself up to safety; but the other never reappeared, while the canoe hurtled and twisted its way down to still water.

The man on the rock did not look up or around him, but lay with his arm stretched around it, as though dazed or half unconscious.

Hugh Griswold, with Harvey Jameison and Jim Phillips, had gone into the woods to search for logs for the fire, but the rest of the party were all on the bank when the tragedy happened. The call for action was imperative, but what to do was the question. Dad solved the problem in a very simple manner, by starting to wade through the rapids to the man on the rock. The water was not deep at this time of year—not above his waist at any part of his trip



A TYPICAL TENT AND ITS INMATES.

across, but the impact of the rushing water against his body was staggering. No one but Dad could have done it. From that time forth, the matching of his marvelous strength against the onrush of the rapids stood pre-eminent among his many achievements, in the minds of the boys of Camp Couchiching.

Slowly—it seemed inch by inch—he won his way to the rock. Scarcely daring to breathe, the boys watched him take the man from his perilous position and practically carry him back to safety. They would have cheered, but the thought of the other man who had gone down to certain destruction before their eyes, kept them silent.

When Dad reached land with his burden, the man fainted, and as he lay on the bank, so great was his pallor that the boys thought he was dead. He was apparently about thirty years of age and had brown, wavy hair and regular features. Evidently he had been ill, and Sandy felt sure he was one of the men from the cabin.

Dad was drenched to the skin, and called peremptorily for a fire, to the boys standing helplessly about. As they jumped to obey, glad to feel that they were doing something, the cheery notes of a song came ringing through the woods:

“Into the heart of the woods we go,
Away from the cares that weigh us so.
A smell of the woods, a song of the reel,
A breath of the campfire soon to feel,”

and Griswold and his aides emerged from the woods with burdens of fire-wood. They stood stock-still at sight of the group by the river. Then Griswold dropped his load and hurried forward.

"What is the trouble?" he cried.

Half a dozen voices tried to explain at once. "Two men upset in the rapids." "We're afraid one is drowned." "Dad rescued this one." "Carried him out on his back." "He looks as if he was dead." "They were drunk."

Glancing from the prostrate stranger to Dad, who, dripping with water, was bending over him and rubbing his limbs, Griswold quickly picked up a tin pail and handed it to Sandy. "Get it half full of water, quick," he directed. "And the rest of you fellows attend to the campfire; we want a big one."

Raking out a bed of coals, he set the pail upon it: almost instantly it began to sizzle and by the time the fire was radiating genial warmth, the coffee was made.

The unconscious man was brought nearer to it, and Harvey Jameison took his position beside him, while Dad set about changing his dripping garments. The thoughts of all were upon the man who had gone down. Watchers had run along the shore to look out for signs of him, but there were none, and no one had any doubt as to his fate.

"It was a case of too much whisky," Dad remarked sadly. "I think they were both too drunk to know what they were doing."

Griswold had not given the stranger more than

a passing glance. He had been too busy doing the things which he knew to be necessary. Now with a cup of strong coffee, he approached him and kneeling down, prepared to administer the stimulant, for the man had opened his eyes a moment before and consciousness seemed to be returning. Sandy heard Griswold give a low cry of astonishment, and saw his face grow white, as he looked for the first time on the death-like face of the stranger. Then quickly catching his breath, he gently raised the man's head and put the cup to his lips.

Slowly the eyes opened and fixed themselves, not on the fire or the faces of those around him, but on the river, and a shudder passed over his frame. He shivered in spite of the heat, and Griswold gave him the rest of the coffee, and slipping a coat under his head, stood up.

The stimulant had its effect. For the first time he was conscious of those around him, and looked wonderingly from one to the other, then raised his eyes to Griswold's face. A startling change passed over him. With a frightened cry he sat up, his eyes starting from their sockets, still fixed on the face above him, his expression that of incredulity, mingled with pitiful appeal.

"My God, it's the Kid!" he breathed, and sank back, apparently unconscious, once more.

The boys stood in speechless astonishment as Griswold sat down and took the stranger's head in his lap as gently as a woman might have done. No one asked a question, for the experiences of the past half

hour had put a spell upon them; such strange things were happening, that anything at all might come to pass now. Only Sandy could not keep silent very long. "I can show you the cabin where he lives, if you want to take him there," he said eagerly.

Griswold shook his head, and Sandy saw that his face was full of pain. The stranger looked up and raised himself again, his breath coming in quick, audible gasps.

"It can't be you!" he cried weakly! "It can't; it can't; you've just come to torment me!"

"No, Don, I'm very real, but I haven't come to torment you. Better lie down again and take it easy. There's more coffee here."

"No, no! You don't know that I've broken every promise I ever made to you. It would have been better to have let me die in the rapids."

"No; don't think of that now. It's lucky for you that someone was here."

"I want you to know that I tried to keep straight. Oh God, *how* I tried!"

"You've been ill?"

"Yes, typhoid, but you can't kill me," he ended with a bitter laugh. Then he suddenly looked around and cried, "Where is Jack?"

No one answered. Then in the silence that followed, Griswold asked, "Was Jack your companion?"

His tone conveyed the truth, and the sick man's face was pitiful to see. It was too horrible; but he lay in silence with closed eyes.

Griswold turned to Dad. "It is Donald Mac-Millan; I knew him in the west," he explained briefly. Then to Sandy he said, "Tell me about the cabin."

Sandy told him what Jim had said, and about the finding of the cabin on the other side of the brook.

"We had better take him there," he said thoughtfully.

"Let me help!" cried Sandy, but the sick man insisted on walking. The shock had weakened him terribly, and he almost collapsed as Griswold and Sandy supported him on the short walk through the woods.

The weather was still dark and unpromising, but all fear of rain seemed to be over. It was too windy for that. There was no talk of taking up their journey, though. The nearest farm house was a mile or two away, and boys were dispatched to give notice of the tragedy and to learn where official notice must be given. It was astonishing how quickly the news spread in that apparently sparsely settled region.

In an incredibly short time half the countryside was there, and soon the body of the drowned man was found half a mile below the rapids. He was well known in the district, through several hunting trips a few years before, and the addresses of several of his friends were known. He had the reputation of being a hard drinker, but a good fellow in other ways, and the country people were shocked at the tragic end of the man who had sat by their firesides and who was such a good comrade.

For two hours Donald MacMillan slept, and Griswold and Sandy watched together in the cabin.

Once in a while the others came and went away again, but Sandy would not leave. The look of sore trouble and disappointment on Griswold's face worried him: never had he seen him so weary and unresponsive. He was gentle enough—more so than usual, in fact—but he spoke but seldom. At last Sandy went down to the river for water, and stayed for a little time discussing the events of the day with the others. When he returned, the man was awake and talking earnestly.

Sandy set the water inside and sat down on the doorstep.

"I don't want you to think that I didn't try, or that I didn't keep straight for a long time, for I did," the voice was saying. "There wasn't a boy in the bunch that wasn't on the square after you went away. If there was any doubt about a thing, they always asked what the Kid would have thought of it, and that settled it.

"I tell you it was great to feel that I was a man again, and not a slave, and I began to make my plans to go home and see the old folks. I never told you, did I, that I ran away from home when I was fifteen and I've never written to them since? No? Well, it's a fact. Perhaps I was more to blame than I thought, but my father—well, there's no use talking now, but he was the kind that nobody could live with. I never worried much about him, but thoughts of my mother have haunted me ever since. I wanted

to go home, and when somebody proposed to come to New Ontario and try our luck in prospecting, I said 'all right, that will bring me so much nearer home.' It was there the devil got hold of me again. I needn't tell you how it happened, but it was a mistake at first, and after that, I didn't care. I broke loose worse than ever. Then I took down sick with typhoid, and my chum proposed after I got better that we come down to this cabin and stay for a few weeks, till I got strong again. He wasn't busy and he came with me. He'd been here before, you see. It was lonesome and not much to do, and he took to drinking hard. He hasn't been sober for over a week. Poor old Jack; he's had his faults, but he's looked after me like a brother. We went out to get provisions and more whisky. You know the rest. Jack's gone, and I ought to have gone too, for all the good I am. I tell you, it was horrible when I was clinging to that rock out there.

"Every sin I had ever committed rose up to mock me. I even dared to pray. I, who have been such a traitor. But, oh, it is no use; it's no use!"

He had been sitting on the side of the bunk, talking feverishly and excitedly, but he threw himself down again with a gesture of despair.

"There's a great deal of use," said Griswold quietly, "and there's no need for despair. Come back to Him, Don, just as you did at first and start all over again."

"How can I? Oh, you don't know what you are saying!"

"Yes, I do. Now listen to me, Don. You meant it all when you came to Him the first time, and quit all this sort of thing, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And you put up a hard fight, if I'm not mistaken."

"Yes, yes."

"Then since you tripped up and went down, you haven't felt very good over it, have you?"

"It's been Hell!"

"Then I'm here to tell you that He wants you back again. Oh, Don, He'll make a man of you. Never mind if you did fall once. He is ready to forgive it all."

"Do you really mean that?"

"Every word of it."

"Oh, if I could only believe it," said Donald tremblingly. "If I could only feel sure, I would stake my all on it, for I am at the end of everything."

"It is a sure thing," said Griswold solemnly. "'Though your sins be as scarlet.' You know the verse. That means you, doesn't it?"

"It sounds like it, and I guess I'll take Him at His word; I can do nothing else."

"Thank God!" said Griswold reverently.

During this conversation Sandy's face was a picture of suppressed excitement; a wonderful thought had come to him, which almost made him shout aloud. His eyes sparkled and his face glowed. Twice he half rose to interrupt, but the character of the con-

versation forbade it. Now he could restrain himself no longer.

“You are Donald!” he cried, as with a spring, he stood beside Griswold.

“That is my name,” said the man wonderingly, while Griswold looked surprised.

“And you left home fifteen years ago last June, and your mother has white hair, and eyes just like yours?”

“The rest is all true enough, but my mother’s hair wasn’t white. It was brown, the color of mine. At least it was when I saw it last.”

“It’s white now. Oh, I knew it was you as soon as you told Mr. Griswold about leaving home, and I’m so glad! Barney!” he cried as that youth stepped up to the door. “What do you think? This is Donald!”

“Donald!” repeated Barney in a stupefied manner. “Who’s Donald?”

“Oh, don’t you know? The one who ran away from home, that his mother hasn’t heard from since.”

Barney looked as pleased and excited as Sandy himself, while Donald continued to look from one to the other in astonishment.

“I don’t know what you are talking about,” he said at last, half impatiently.

“Didn’t you live in a white house at the end of a long lane, with a cupboard with blue dishes, and a picture of a boy on the wall, and red geraniums in the window?” demanded Sandy.

"Yes, that's my home, but tell me what you know about it," he cried in agitated tones.

"Oh, we called there one day, Barney and I; we'd run away from home and we were hungry. Your mother gave us bread and milk and chicken."

"Yes, and she made us take some away with us. Gee, but we were hungry," supplemented Barney.

"I was lame and she got some liniment and bound up my ankle; and say, she wants you back awfully," continued Sandy.

Donald was whiter than ever. Leaning forward in an agitated manner, he drank in every word. "Ah! that was my mother!" he breathed. "What—what did she say, and how did she look?"

"She looked kind of sorry," said Sandy softly, "and she told us to go home to our mothers, because it was weary work for the mothers, waiting for the boys who never came home."

Donald put his face in his hands and choked down something like a sob, while the tears stood frankly in Griswold's eyes. For a time no one spoke. The boys swallowed hard and looked attentively out over the river, and then Griswold said earnestly:

"Do you need any further proof than this that you are under divine care?"

Donald lifted his head, a new life and determination written in his face.

"I am going home," he said simply.

They made a grave for poor erring Jack among the wild flowers, under a spreading maple, and there the next evening the country people came from far

and near, bringing with them a minister who was seeking health in that region.

They laid him to rest, the distant sound of the rapids in their ears, and a strange sense of the awfulness of sin in their hearts.

Donald MacMillan was there, straight and tense and silent, only the deathly pallor of his face showing the grief and repentance he felt. The minister's words were few, but they were all of the mercy and the loving kindness of God.

When he had finished speaking, the boys noticed that the light from the setting sun broke through the trees, and fell over the new-made grave with a beam of hope.

It fell in a golden sheen over Donald as he stood beside Griswold, and as it did so he quickly raised his head, and looked up.

All the doubt and trouble seemingly vanished in a moment, and in its place came the light of a great resolve, and a great joy.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOME AGAIN

ONCE more Sandy and Barney were trudging along the dusty road which dipped down to the stone bridge over the creek, where they had met old Bill, the tramp, a number of weeks before. The fields were brown and yellow now, and the creek was very low. The birds still sang in the trees, whose leaves hung limp, from the heat and dust of summer, and the same squirrel challenged their approach from the tree near the bridge.

With curious feelings they noted that a new barn was in course of erection in place of the one which was destroyed by fire. Instead of the bedraggled pair who had fought and begged their way that day, however, they were coming this time like conquering generals bearing home the spoils of war.

They were bringing Donald MacMillan home, and their hearts beat high with the importance of their commission. He had been considered too weak and ill to take the journey alone, and Hugh Griswold, in consultation with the Chief over the telephone at the nearest station, had arranged that they should be his companions.

Their clothes had been brought to the train at the Orillia station, and there, in a flurry of greeting

and farewell, they had seen the last reminder of Camp Couchiching. It was about to close, and they were going straight home after this.

They could not forget how the Chief had jumped on the train before it had well stopped, and how he had hurried forward and given Donald such a hand-clasp as brought the glow to his cheek and the sparkle to his eye. When the Chief bore down on a man like that, it always made him sit up and want to do things worth while.

Donald had insisted on walking from the station; in fact there was nothing else to do, but by the time they reached the bridge, he was weak and spent, and the boys suggested that they rest on the bank of the creek.

“You’ve got to buck up some before we take you home,” urged Sandy, eyeing him critically but affectionately, as they threw themselves down under a spreading tree. They had learned to like him for his own sake during the past few days. Despite his weakness, there was a breezy directness about him which attracted them wonderfully. Then, too, his utter devotion to Griswold won them. Not that he said anything, or even looked it; they just felt it; that was all. He had grown strangely silent as they neared home, and the boys, too, felt vaguely uneasy. With fine reticence they had refrained from any reference to his father, but they had not forgotten what they had heard on their former visit, and they wondered what would be his attitude towards the wanderer.

Donald smiled indulgently at Sandy's remark. "You kids have got your hands full this time," he said.

"That's right. You see, we don't want to bring you this far and then have you disgrace us at the last."

"How are we going to face the music? That's what I want to know," said Barney, as he selected a pebble to skim into the creek. "Who's going first, and what are we going to say?"

"Well, we've got to break it to his mother easy, that's sure," remarked Sandy very decidedly. "I'll just go ahead and tell her that a friend of hers from the States is here and wants to see her."

"*You* will?"

"Sure I will. If you go butting in, Barney Allen, you'll queer the whole business."

"*You* will," repeated Barney aggravatingly. "Say, you never did a thing yet without putting your foot in it somehow."

"That's all you know about it," retorted Sandy in an offended tone, and turned to Donald. "I could introduce you as a sewing machine agent, or a fellow that sells medicine for corns and bunions," he suggested tentatively.

Donald smiled wanly. "You fellows own me to-day," he said uncertainly. "I'll let you manage it. You can go ahead when we get near the house, if you want to. It doesn't make much difference to me. I've got just so much to go through anyway."

I'm going home, and I'm going to see my mother. That is all I'm thinking about."

"Yes, we'll attend to the rest," said Sandy comfortingly.

"Do you see the new barn they're putting up?" asked Barney irrelevantly.

Sandy glanced over at it uneasily, and the whole scene of that awful night came vividly before him. He thought of poor, good-natured, old Bill, and of the murderer awaiting trial now in that northern town. His watch had been recovered and was at home waiting for him, but the memory of that night would never be effaced—never.

"I heard a man say as we got off the train that someone had been hurt there to-day," remarked Donald.

"Gracious! I feel as if that might be my fault, too," groaned Sandy.

Donald had heard the story of the experiences of that night, and changed the subject by some reference to camp.

"Gee, how funny it will be to be back in the city," cried Barney. "I feel as if I was going to burst my collar button every minute."

"That's because you're too fat," retorted Sandy.

"I am, eh? Well, look here," and Barney proudly drew himself up, and expanded his chest until not only his collar-button, but every button on his clothes was in danger of flying to pieces.

"We are going to form a new patrol of the boy scouts and I am to be leader," remarked Sandy. "Mr.

Adams is to be our scoutmaster and he is just fine. There will be lots to do, no fear. And then besides, we are to be in Mr. Griswold's group down at the club."

Donald sat up. "You are?" he said. "Well, let me tell you, that you fellows don't half appreciate a leader like that."

"Oh, but we do!" cried both boys in a breath.

"You think you do, lads, and I'm not blaming you," said Donald gently, "but what I mean to say, is that you haven't the same reason to know him and care for him that some of the rest of us poor devils have."

The boys looked at him wonderingly, but did not speak, and he went on passionately. "Yes, it's the fellows that he has followed and helped through thick and thin that know him. Why, he came out there to the construction camp and worked as a common navvy during his college vacation, just so he could help the men. He was so young and boyish that we all called him the 'Kid.'

"I was in with a gambling, drinking set and he just came in and made friends with us, and never once did he look at us as if he knew we weren't fit for decent people to speak to, not he. Oh, he was white from the ground up, the Kid was. Then he followed us one night into a gambling hell, where he had heard there was going to be trouble, and he saved my life. Yes, saved it at the risk of his own. That's the kind of a man he is. Did he cast it up to me afterwards? Not on your life! He clean for-



WHITE CANNIBALS

got all about it. And then *you* kids think you know him. Not much!"

The boys were silent for a moment and then Sandy said humbly, "I guess we don't know him, but he has done us some good, too."

"Take it from me," said Donald emphatically, "it isn't what a fellow says that makes you believe in him and swear by him. It's what he is. I've been a poor fool and not worth anybody's notice, but by God's help, I'm not going to break faith again. I've had my lesson, and I intend to lead a decent life, and do all I can to help other fellows to do the same."

Sandy impulsively reached out and gave Donald his hand. There was more than approval and encouragement in the action. As they looked into each other's eyes, they knew it was a solemn pact.

Barney blinked at them a moment, and then said quickly, "See here, you fellows, you can count me in on that, too. Yes, I mean it, and I'll stand by it."

After that, there was silence for a few moments, and then half reluctantly they turned to the road again. As they neared the lane leading to the Mac-Millan home, each heart was beating fast with suppressed excitement.

The boys were eager and happy. They had read of such denouements in novels, but had never hoped to figure in one. But to Donald there was much of pain and shame in the situation. He was also very doubtful as to the welcome he would receive from his father, and when once more the boys offered to go ahead and break the news, he gladly consented.

Half way up the lane there was a silver maple, an old friend of his boyhood, and he leaned against it tremblingly, wondering if he would have strength to get to the fir tree which stood between it and the house. He had brought that fir tree from the woods, and had planted it with his own hands when he was ten; now it was a great tree."

"How will we fix it?" asked Barney in a half whisper, as they neared the house and noted that there were two or three vehicles in the yard and several men standing over by the barn.

"Why, we'll come up to it easy. I'll tell Mrs. MacMillan that there's somebody wants to see her. Of course, she'll ask who it is and we can say that it's a man she knew a long time ago; then if she asks his name, we'll say it's a fellow who knew her before he knew anybody else. She'd be sure to guess Donald then."

"Sure."

The door of the kitchen was partly open, and they were not a little amazed to see that there were several people inside. What was going on, anyway?

In answer to a faint knock, an elderly woman came to the door, whom they had never seen before. She looked at them disapprovingly, and Sandy asked in a choking voice if Mrs. MacMillan was in.

She shook her head sadly. "Don't trouble her now," she said in a mournful whisper. "She is with Mr. MacMillan, and the doctor says he may not live an hour."

"Oh, but I must see her then," cried Sandy.

"Somebody's here and wants to see her. Please let me speak to her."

The woman looked at him in surprise. "She has been with him for three days and three nights, and has scarcely left his bedside. Run away now and don't trouble her," she said sternly.

"Yes, but we *must* see her," they persisted in a breath.

"Well, then you'll just wait."

"We can't wait."

The colloquy was interrupted by Mrs. MacMillan's appearance at the door. Her face was pale and troubled, but she held out a trembling hand.

"Why, it's the two laddies!" she said kindly. It was the same face that the boys remembered so well—strong and sweet and steady-eyed, and so like Donald's.

"Somebody wants to see you," faltered Sandy faintly.

She passed her hand wearily across her forehead.

"To see me," she repeated. "Ah, I fear I'm not seeing people to-day——"

"But you must see *him*," interrupted Sandy.

"It's—it's Donald!" cried Barney.

"What are you saying, laddie?" she cried sharply, and clutched the door-post for support.

Then Sandy and Barney both threw discretion to the winds. Sandy reiterated Barney's assertion, while the latter rushed out to call Donald. He waved his hat and shouted, and then when Donald, unable to keep up with this swift change of tactics,

did not move fast enough to suit him, he put his fingers in his mouth and made the shrill, unearthly whistle that only a boy in dead earnest can make.

The men hastened from the barn at the unseemly disturbance, and the women came out to protest.

"Yes, it's Donald," Sandy was saying excitedly. "We found him and we brought him home to you. He's been sick, but he's getting better."

The mother's face was pallid and her eyes were straining past him towards the figure coming up the lane; the while she was repeating dazedly: "Donald, Donald." Then she knew him, and with a glad cry, she ran to meet him with arms thrown wide. He was not the ruddy-faced boy who had run away from home years before, but she gathered the pale, shabbily-dressed man to her arms as if he had been a child.

"Oh, my lad, my lad," she breathed, "your faither's deein', and he couldna' dee content until he made it right wi' you."

Together they stood clasped in each other's arms, and then the onlookers stood aside while she led her son in to his father.

Even at that moment, she was not forgetful of the two boys who had brought to her this great joy in the midst of her sorrow, and she silently motioned to them to come in.

Wonderingly they followed. It was all turning out so different from what they had planned, and they sat down in the roomy kitchen to wait. It was the same cheerful room, with the yellow-painted

floor, the crisp curtains and the flowers in the windows. Opening out of it was the bedroom occupied by the sick man, and the boys listened in awed silence to the sounds issuing from it. It was the second time within the week that they had come in touch with death and they felt very solemn.

Donald's voice was low and uncertain, but the dying man's was clear and distinct between labored breaths. "I have been a hard—hard man—forgive—and take care of your mother—I can die easier now."

The voice ceased and there was nothing but the heavy breathing of the patient to be heard, and someone closed the door.

To the boys their voracious appetites seemed sacrilegious and indecent that night, for no one else seemed to think of eating at all. They blushed when the plate was piled high the second time with the snowy home-made bread, and they had had their third helping to peaches and cream; but Mrs. Mac-Millan came out and smiled upon them encouragingly, and they kept on.

In the midst of her sorrow, there was such a look of deep joy and gratitude in her sweet face, that Sandy found himself wishing that he could do something for her really worth while.

After six weeks of sleeping under canvas and in the open, the little bedroom under the eaves closed in on them uncomfortably; but they did not lie awake to worry about it, and when death visited the house that night, they were entirely unaware of it.

In the the morning they found everything quiet and orderly. The man who had just passed into the great unknown had not been an agreeable person to get along with; and while his widow mourned for him, from an innate sense of loyalty, yet there was a vague suggestion of relief in the atmosphere, which even the boys felt.

Somewhere in the small hours of the morning, when Donald and his mother were alone with their dead, he told her everything—enough, at least, to make her understand something of the depth of his fall, and the greatness of his redemption.

This morning he looked better and stronger than the boys had yet seen him; and this, notwithstanding the fact that he had been awake all night under the most sorrowful circumstances. It was evident that very quietly and seriously, he was accepting the responsibilities which naturally belonged to him.

After breakfast he insisted on seeing personally to the hitching of the horse which was to take the boys to the station. His mother's eyes melted with a great joy as they followed him, and turning impulsively to the boys, she laid a hand on the shoulder of each.

"Oh, my lads!" she cried, "it's a mother's blessing will follow you wherever you go. I want you to come sometime soon, and spend a week with us; I'll never be content now till I know you better."

Sandy promised for them both, for she would not be denied; then she continued:

"And you must tell yon two laddies from me; yon

Griswold and the other, who pulled Donald out of the water——”

“Dad,” supplied Sandy.

“Aye; tell them both that there’s a thanfu’ mother that’s wantin’ to see them, and that the door will always stand open wide for them.”

The carriage was ready, and the boys took their places; Donald’s last words were spoken after they were in:

“Tell him that he’ll find me here on the farm, and that I’ve found my work,” he said, and waved his hand after the departing vehicle.

At the foot of the lane, Sandy looked back and saw the mother and son returning to the house hand in hand; and there came to him like a flash, a vision of the tremendous seriousness of life, and of the sometimes far reaching consequence of little acts. He had never thought of it before.

In the rush and roar of the city once more, and in the whirl of greetings from friends and relatives, camp and its experiences seemed suddenly very far away. The dip of the paddle, the roar of the rapids, the smoke of the campfire, and the whisperings of the wind through the forest was more than memory, however. It had entered their blood, and in their hearts they said: “We are going again, and the next time we are going farther.”

Sandy was glad to be home, too, and the stories of adventure crowded on each other so fast, in his mind, that he could not tell them fast enough.

Even his mother found herself laughing merrily

over tales of boyish frolic at which she would have frowned a month ago. All unknown, even to her husband, she had been doing some deep thinking since Parents' Day at camp, and had arrived at a definite conclusion. When Sandy outlined his plans for the new patrol of boy scouts, of which he was to be leader, she electrified him by saying:

"I have had the attic arranged so that you may use it for your headquarters."

For a moment Sandy stared at her speechlessly. This was the most unheard of thing yet. "Why—the fellows would have to go up the stairs"—he faltered at last.

"Yes, I know, but I want them to come," she rejoined, and Sandy felt that his cup of joy was full.

Ahead of him was a fall and winter filled with the most delightful prospects of scoutcraft, work, and companionships. As he threw out his arms, and stretched himself to his full height, feeling so strong and so physically fit, he wished that he might be called upon to do something hard and really worth while.

The next evening as he and his father were in the library, the maid brought to him a package and a letter, both from camp.

The package contained a beautiful Honor pennant, specially decorated with the crest of the Central Young Men's Christian Association, and the initials C. C. S., standing, the letter explained, for "Camp Couchiching Spirit." The letter was from the Chief and said that by universal consent, the

pennant had been awarded to him for the best all round development through the entire camp, and for the most noted manifestations of the Camp Couchiching spirit, of "help the other fellow."

With shining eyes, Sandy handed it across the table to his father.

Mr. Merrill read the letter, and fingered the pennant with more pride and satisfaction than he cared to show.

"That is well," he said, and then as his fingers played over the word HONOR, on the pennant, he added:

"You seem to have learned something besides boxing and pillow-fighting up there."

Sandy looked thoughtful a moment, and then said hesitatingly,

"Yes, I guess I've had it knocked into me that there are other people,—and that a fellow who has the making of a man in him can find a whole lot to do for them."

THE END

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